SERMONS

ON THE

DIGNITY OF MAN,

AND THE VALUE OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTS OF HUMAN HAPPINESS.

From the German of the
REV. GEORGE JOACHIM ZOLLIKOFER,
Minister of the Reformed Congregation at Leipsick.

By the Rev. William Tooke, F.R.S.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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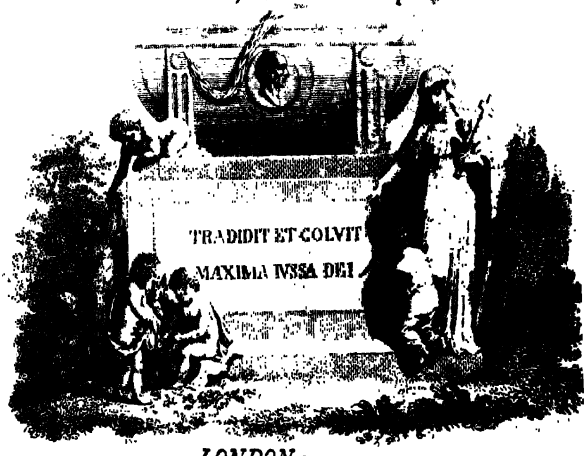

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AS I delivered theſe ſermons occaſionally, and neither in the ſame order of ſucceſſion in which they now appear, nor upon any preconceived plan of connection, compaſs and amplitude as to their reſpective ſubjects, it is not unlikely that ſome readers may here obſerve a twofold defect, a defect in point of complement and of more immediate connection. I preſume however that this does not materially affect the work. Although all that belongs to human happineſs, or is accounted as requiſite to it, may not be ſpecifically and expreſsly treated of; yet no ſpecies or claſs of theſe objects is entirely overlooked. And any other order or ſucceſſion of them may be adopted at pleaſure, ſince they are all diſtinct and ſeparate treatiſes. Neither was it ſo much my intention to write a complete ſyſtem of the doctrine of happineſs, as to handle ſome of its moſt important ingredients, and to handle them in a manner ſuited to pulpit-diſcourſes addreſſed to an audience compoſed of thinking and for the moſt part enlightened perſons. This latter circumſtance will plead in my behalf, if the diſcourſe ſhould in ſome

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paſſages appear ſomewhat more philoſophical, or abſtracted than uſual. I have the happineſs to addreſs myſelf to hearers, who in general are fully competent to digeſt and profit by ſuch diſcourſes. The more rare this happineſs is, the leſs excuſable would it be in me were I to ſpeak to them as to children, and not always endeavour to lead them to higher attainments in knowledge. And there certainly can be no harm in it, if the doctrines of religion and morality are delivered in various methods; and at times even ſo, as that men more enured to reflection may be taken and ſatisfied with them. — Experience has likewiſe taught me, that even people of ſlender information and inferior culture learn more from ſuch diſcourſes, when they have once ceaſed to be ſtrangers to them, than from others, compoſed in a hebrew idiom, and exactly fitted to the ſcholaſtic ſyſtem, of which moſt commonly they have no conception at all. Indeed diſcourſes, generally ſpeaking, need not work upon the inſtant, unleſs in the caſe of charitable collections, but ſhould be calculated to produce permanent effects on perſons not totally ignorant and incapable of making reflections of their own. Let a man preach to them as he will, having no expanſe of mind, they will never be able to take in the whole ſcope of the diſcourſe at one view, or even to form clear conceptions of any part of it. Here or there, they will apprehend ſome detached ſentence, ſome thought that ſtrikes them, and will perhaps occaſionally recollect

collect it again; and, if only this happens, and that frequently, they muſt be always conſiderable gainers by it.

Should ſome of the ſubjects here treated of appear to others not clerical, or not theological and biblical enough; in regard to the former, I intreat them to conſider, that every pulpit has its own circle of hearers, and that theſe hearers have their peculiar exigencies; and in regard to the latter, to weigh in their own minds whether anything that relates ſo nearly to human perfection and happineſs, can be either untheological or unbiblical. To me at leaſt, every truth is a religious and biblical truth, that has for its object the radical improvement and the laſting happineſs of mankind; though it ſhould not as it were immediately relate to God and to the future world, and is nowhere expreſsly and ſcientifically treated of in the Bible, which preſuppoſes many things, which but ſlightly touches upon others in few words, and leaves the farther expoſition and application of all to ourſelves, or which even delivers the very ſame things in a different phraſeology. The force of the ſcriptural doctrines by no means lies in the words wherein they were anciently promulgated to the jews and the heathens, but in the truth and the importance of the doctrines themſelves. In proportion therefore as the civilization, the language, the manners and cuſtoms, the mode of thinking and of living, the compaſs of human knowledge and of human exigencies, undergo alteration;

ſo alſo may and ſhould, not indeed the eſſentials, but the range, the application, and the method of illuſtrating the doctrines of religion and wiſdom be altered and adapted. In the ſermon concerning the chriſtian paſtoral office, which is the laſt in this collection, I have more circumſtantially explained myſelf upon this ſubject.

For the reſt, the greater the importance of a right eſtimation of things, and the ſtronger the certainty of the fact, that it is the foundation of all real virtue and piety, and the ſureſt way to happineſs both in the preſent and the future life, ſo much the better grounded is my hope, that, under the bleſſing of God, this labour may not be without its uſe.

*** *The ſermons of Zollikofer being now generally received in ſerious and reflecting families, it has been judged expedient for their accommodation to annex to theſe volumes forms of particular and family prayer drawn up by that great luminary of our church, Benjamin lord biſhop of Wincheſter.*

SOME ACCOUNT

OF

THE AUTHOR.

GEORGE JOACHIM ZOLLIKOFER was born at St. Gall in Switzerland, the 5th of Auguſt 1730. His father David Anthony Zollikofer, is ſtill remembered there as an eminent practitioner in the law, and as a pious and upright man. That he omitted nothing in the literary education of his ſon may well be imagined; it is however ſtill more manifeſt, that by his own virtuous example he became his moral tutor, a tutor to whom poſterity is under ſuch infinite obligations through his pupil. Education at that time had not yet become a ſubject of philoſophical diſquiſition: among the Germans at leaſt no one had hitherto enlarged upon Locke's principles in a view to render them of more general utility. The various helps for awakening the curioſity, for opening the underſtanding and moulding the hearts of children, which ſo much

abound in our days, being then utterly unknown, the formation of the character and habits was left generally to example, and that end was thus perhaps more surely attained. Young Zollikofer, when arrived at the proper age, was put to the gymnasium of his native town; from whence, being intended for the church, he was sent to prosecute his studies, first at Bremen, and afterwards at the university of Utrecht, where the divinity professors are said to have been then in high repute. It is well known that the generality of students at these great seminaries, are wont to adhere pertinaciously to what has been instilled into them by their academical tutors; never venturing to advance one pace beyond the string of ideas with which they for several years have been constantly tethered, by acquiring new ones for themselves, or even presuming impartially and repeatedly to examine the stock they have obtained from others, and to form new combinations among them. Everything therefore, in regard to their general usefulness afterwards when they come into office, depends on what sort of tutors the young men have had during their stay at college; they being nothing more than organs through which the knowledge imparted to them in a lecture-room is brought into circulation, exactly as they received it. Whatever were the tenets of their master will be theirs from their youth up unto their lives end; and accordingly, whatever country you go into, let the religion be what it will, the unthinking part thereof, who

who are everywhere extremely reſpectable in point of numbers, are always the reputed orthodox. It would be beyond the deſign of theſe few pages to expatiate on the cauſes whence theſe obſtructions to intellectual originality proceed. It has been furniſed by ſome, that the education of a college is generally unfavourable to vigour or originality of underſtanding, by levelling the diſtinctions of nature, by training up the mind in an habitual veneration for authorities, and prepoſterouſly leading it to miſtake the means of education for its end. This much however is of univerſal notoriety, that it is extremely difficult to get out of the track in which we have been trained for a number of years, and is ſo particularly adapted to ſoothe our natural propenſity to eaſe and indolence, to abandon our cuſtomary models and guides and boldly ſtrike out into another channel. Zollikofer however was a genius of this ſuperior order: no individual perhaps ever poſſeſſed a juſter apprehenſion, or was ſo ſeldom obſtructed in the uſe of it by indolence, enthuſiaſm or authority. His genius was not to be rebuked, nor his originality repreſſed. He once obſerved to an intimate friend, that he had been obliged with the reſt to attend lectures in a ſyſtematic theology, reſting ſolely on the unproved formularies, ſophiſms, technical and ſcholaſtic terms of the compendiums at that time in general uſe, inſtead of having delivered to him, as the foundation of his future ſtudies, a ſound expoſition of the Bible, in connection with a ſtrict

ſtrict inveſtigation of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. And yet where, in all Zollikofer's theological writings is there a trace to be ſeen that betrays his former forced acquaintance with thoſe dull pedantic ſtudies? Where is there one idea, either in his ſermons or his books of devotion, that diſcovers but a faint indication of that mechanical training? A proof of his active, ſcrutinizing, comprehenſive and penetrating genius; a genius to which Truth, the nobleſt property of mind, was paramount to all conſiderations beſides. — Even in the other ſciences, he ſeems to have been by no means ſatisfied with the methods adopted. "The little that I know," this modeſt man was heard to ſay, "I was obliged to teach myſelf, chiefly after I was come to years of maturity; for indeed I had but a miſerable education." His erudition perhaps was not of that ſort particularly ſtyled recondite, and he certainly is not to be reckoned among thoſe literary characters, who, with a great treaſure of abſtruſe philoſophic lore, poſſeſs moreover an abundant ſtock of hiſtorical, antiquarian and a variety of other branches of ſcience, which he conſidered rather as inſtruments for the underſtanding to work with, than as ultimate objects of purſuit. Nevertheleſs he was deficient in no ſpecies of knowledge that can afford any philoſophical materials for uſeful and generally ſerviceable ideas. Both in natural hiſtory and natural philoſophy he poſſeſſed uncommon attainments. He was well verſed in the hiſtories of the ſeveral nations of the world;

world; and, from the viciſſitudes and revolutions of empires, from the riſe, decline and fall of great republics, from the characters and fortunes of the diſtinguiſhed perſonages that have appeared in different countries; in ſhort, from the whole of thoſe frequently inexplicable, broken and extraordinary tiſſues of events and apparent accidents, from the alternate conflicts of light with darkneſs in various nations, from the fooliſh, often furious and dreadful ſallies of human paſſions and vices — from all this, I ſay, he had formed a conſiderable number either of general or particular ideas, which he had conſolidated with the common ſtock of his acquired philoſophical knowledge. In ſtudying hiſtory he had always the true and proper end of it in view, conſidering it, with the wiſe of all ages, as the teacher of practical philoſophy and the buſineſs of life. Thus he derived more real utility from his ſtudies than many celebrated names who were learned only by rote, having gathered little or nothing from their's except a proſody enabling them to ſcan verſes; a logic which teaches them only to argue like ſophiſts, a philoſophy not uniformly regulated and controuled by common ſenſe in its application and reſult, and a fund of hiſtory conſiſting in a huge collection of facts, of proper names and chronological dates.

In the ancient and modern languages, particularly the latin, french and engliſh he was no ordinary proficient; and, beſides other uſeful works in each of

of them, had made their beſt poets, orators and philoſophers his particular ſtudy. Of Cicero he was a very great admirer. And if Zollikofer were to be compared with any orator of antiquity, it would certainly be with that Roman. Indeed the ſubjects they had to treat of in their diſcourſes were extremely different, as was alſo the object they had in view. The former addreſſed his audience on matters relative to the intereſts and proſperity of ſtates as well as of private individuals, the latter on the moſt important concerns of the human mind; the former employed his rhetoric in producing ſudden determination and action, not unfrequently by inflaming the imagination and agitating the various paſſions of his hearers, the latter, not content with ſuddenly producing ſome virtuous emotions or actions, completely convinced the underſtanding of the importance and bleſſedneſs of virtue, warming and animating the heart, by the ſame pure celeſtial beam of truth with which he enlightened the mind, not to ſingle eaſy acts of goodneſs, but to VIRTUE. Here we ſee two great orators widely different from each other, as in the nature of things they muſt be. But in all the accompliſhments required by real oratory, or rather belonging to eloquence, who is ſo like to Cicero as Zollikofer? In the careful ſelection of the propereſt terms, in the natural and artleſs compoſition of the ſeveral ſentences, in the cautious and ſparing uſe of ſuch tropes, figures and metaphors, as are adapted to give the moſt pleaſing variety to the whole,

whole, and repreſent the ideas they denote on their moſt luminous and beautiful ſide, in the ingenious turn and uncommon harmony of the periods, the exact and lucid order in which the thoughts ſucceed each other, in the rapid, though ſmoothly flowing ſtream of the diſcourſe, in the moſt exquiſite ſymmetry of the whole, and in that energy, that graceful and noble ſimplicity which never fails to excite the higheſt admiration in the minds of all good judges, and is ſo flattering to ſuch as are not, as to induce them to imagine, that with very little trouble they could write as well or even better: who in reſpect to theſe excellences can more properly be compared to Cicero than Zollikofer? He no leſs than the Roman, had indefatigably ſtudied the difficult ſcience of oratory in his earlier years, and had as aſſiduouſly employed that art which is ſo often miſapprehended and neglected, though ſo excellent and neceſſary to the accompliſhment of the orator, I mean poetry in all its various forms. It does not appear that in his juvenile age he tried his talents in any particular ſpecies of it; but that he ſtudied it even more in acknowledged models than in ſimple theory, is very well known, ſince he read the beſt performances of the poets both in the ancient and modern languages of the moſt poliſhed nations; and Mr. Chriſtian Victor Kindervater, who communicates theſe particulars of his life, mentions his recollecting to have heard him ſay, that while a youth he read Bodmer's poetical works ſo diligently over and

over

over for a length of time, that in compoſing afterwards ſome eſſays in proſe, he found that many of the ſentences had run into hexameters quite unawares to him.

Poetry and oratory are in certain reſpects not ſo far aſunder as perhaps to ſome they may appear to be. It is the principal buſineſs of the orator to convince his hearers that what he ſays is true and uſeful; but if he wiſh that conviction to paſs quickly into action, the ideas he has excited ſhould receive a peculiar energy ſo as at the ſame time to affect the heart; and if the orator be deſirous on ſome particular occaſion to raiſe emotions of no ordinary kind, his diſcourſe will of itſelf riſe above the common ſtyle of proſe, and partly aſſume a lyric appearance. If this then be one of the neceſſary requiſites of a good orator, what important advantages may not the ſtudy of poetry procure him? Or is it no advantage to the orator to habituate himſelf to an harmonious cadence, to enrich and poliſh his diction, to give ſcope to his imagination, and to acquire a dexterity in repreſenting abſtract ideas under the charms of agreeable images, and eſpecially to conſider his ſubject not merely in generals, but in its ſeveral, although leſs ſtriking points of view, ſo as to render this ſtudy ſubſervient to his purpoſes? The genius of Zollikofer ſhone forth with uncommon luſtre whenever his object was rather to affect the paſſions than to inform the mind, though this was ſeldom the caſe with him. What awful ſenſa-

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tions did this great man excite in the hearts of all his congregation, once when he delineated the tremendous triumph of death? How anxiouſly did even the moſt inſenſible ſouls then ſhudder as he depicted the horrors of death and corruption! And how every heart throbbed with the livelieſt tranſports, when, preſently after, with all the magic of eloquence he unfolded the banners of ſalvation and diſplayed the bliſsful triumph of everlaſting life! What inexpreſſible ſentiments of gratitude to the great Sovereign of the univerſe, glowed in every breaſt, when he encouraged his hearers to rejoice and give thanks for the grateful return of ſpring! How he melted every ſoul into the ſofteſt feelings of humanity while diſcourſing on the ſubject of placability and forgiveneſs; and there was not a perſon, but on leaving the church was diſpoſed to relent and ready to forgive, who would not have eagerly extended his arms in reconcilement with his mortal enemy, had he been ſo unfortunate as to have one? But it would be unneceſſary to cite inſtances, as certainly no proof will here be required, which could only be afforded by ſuch as attended his diſcourſes; and every attentive hearer of him has felt in his own heart, how forcibly likewiſe in this reſpect the pathetic exhortations of Zollikofer wrought upon it. However it may not be amiſs juſt to quote a paſſage from a very celebrated writer as it ſo cloſely relates to the point in hand: "Oh, my beloved Zollikofer, what delightful experiences I am conſtantly

feeling of the truth of thoſe leſſons you delivered at Leipſic; thoſe truly uſeful doctrines, which, diſregarding a cold and barren theology, inculcate wiſe and virtuous precepts, that warm and amend the heart. On quitting your auditory, the man of buſineſs forgets his vexations, pours his anxieties into the boſom of friendſhip, ſurrenders his feelings to the charms of conſolation, until his heart is dilated with new hopes and his inquietudes are ſo far ſuſpended as to enable him to ſuſtain their return with fortitude, or to diſpel them with courage. The ſtudious man abandons his recondite and laborious reſearches, eſcapes from the labyrinth, and finds in the innocent and ſimple ſatisfactions of his family and dependants more real content and happineſs, than even art and ſcience could afford him. — Men, in ſhort, of every caſt and character here find by degrees the mind's bleſt calm, and learn to put on the pure ſpirit of the goſpel of Chriſt *."

And was it poſſible that the politer parts of ſcience, or the belles lettres, as they are called, did not contribute their ſhare towards theſe attainments in oratory? It is well known that they are held in open contempt by ſome of the learned, and are at leaſt tacitly deſpiſed by others: but this ſcience too in return takes a public revenge on its ſcorners as often as they have to ſpeak with warmth and energy before their audiences. —

* Zimmermann on Solitude.

Hitherto

Hitherto but little has been ſaid of the particular circumſtances in the life of our author; theſe, however, will not detain us long.

Shortly after he had completed his academical courſe, he obtained an eſtabliſhment as preacher in his own country, at Murten in the Pays de Vaud. But here he remained only a ſhort time, having a call to a more conſiderable place at Monſtein in the Griſons. This congregation likewiſe had not the happineſs to poſſeſs him for a much longer period; he being invited to Iſenburg as preacher there. Yet neither was this ſtation the theatre which providence had marked out for diſſeminating truth and happineſs extenſively around him, by his talents and his zeal. In the year 1758, at the age of eight and twenty, he was appointed one of the german preachers at the church of the evangelically reformed at Leipſick. It is not to be ſuppoſed that at this time he had arrived at that degree of perfection either in the compoſition or delivery of his diſcourſes to which he afterwards attained and was conſtantly farther attaining; but which with the co-operation of ſo many fortunate circumſtances, both internal and external, it was not likely he ſhould fail of reaching. A congregation conſiſting of perſons far ſuperior in point of education and gentility to thoſe of his former ſtations; a city which for ſeveral ages paſt has reckoned among its inhabitants ſo many people of learning and ingenuity, where conſequently no ſmall number of eyes are

directed towards the profeſſors of divinity, the whole amount of them not being ſo large as that any one ſhould eſcape obſervation; the eſpecial convenience of obtaining without difficulty the beſt compoſitions in every department of literature; the friendſhip and eſteem of ſo many deſerving profeſſors of the univerſity, and among them the great Erneſti; an office in which he had only moderate labours to perform, not prevented by thoſe troubleſome functions which occupy ſo much of the time of ſeveral intelligent and able preachers of that city, from giving his diſcourſes that degree of perfection that he wiſhed; and what is even more than all the reſt, his own high ſenſe of the importance and dignity of his office; what might be expected from theſe propitious circumſtances, in conjunction with Zollikofer's extraordinary talents; and what did they not effect? The univerſal approbation he met with on the part of his numerous congregation from his very firſt appearance there, conſtantly augmented from day to day, and adhered to him to the very laſt hour that he addreſſed them. It is no eaſy matter to aſcertain the utility a preacher procures to a people by his pulpit diſcourſes. The teſtimony however of all that heard him is unanimous in this, that they were not only captivated with the ſound eloquence of his compoſitions and delivery, but that they acquired from his diſcourſes a great number of new ideas, that he illuſtrated many others which they had found hitherto obſcure,

ſcure, that he corrected them of many prejudices, that he communicated to them many incitements to virtue till then unknown or not rightly viewed, and that the generality of his audience were greatly indebted to him in reference to their intellectual and moral improvement. It is not to be denied, that ſome of his hearers, attracted principally by his commanding flow of eloquence, in frequenting his diſcourſes had no views of becoming wiſer and more virtuous by them; but it can as little be doubted that even they procured ſome benefit, however inconſiderable, ſince it is very probable, that otherwiſe they would never have attended on public worſhip at all.

Several volumes of his excellent diſcourſes have for ſome years been in the hands of the public, and are in high and deſerved repute wherever the german language is underſtood, by all perſons to whom religion and virtue are objects of ſerious concern; to which the number of editions they have gone through and that are continually publiſhing, bear ample teſtimony, as well as to the taſte and judgment of the times in compoſitions of this nature. For whoever is deſirous of reading ſpiritual diſcourſes, in which the truths of religion are delivered free from falſe principles and rhetorical ſophiſtries, from all abſtruſe ſcholaſtic ſubtilties and controverſies, in the moſt harmonious order, and in the nobleſt expreſſions, perfectly adapted to the ſubject, with all that can excite a true cordial in-

tereſt in it, in which ſo many fatal prejudices are combated with the invincible arms of truth, in which the beauty and beatitude of virtue are repreſented in the moſt glowing colours, in which the ſeveral incitements and means to the practice of it are clearly and perſuaſively pointed out, wherein the value of ſo many objects, which though ſeldom diſcourſed of in the ſacred chair, yet have ſo vaſt an influence on human happineſs and human miſery are placed in the moſt juſt and perſpicuous point of view; in ſhort, if he would read purely for the ſake of becoming wiſer and happier, of progreſſive virtue and approving heaven, what can he read better than the ſermons of Zollikofer? And if it be true that excellent models contribute more towards the forming of pupils in the art than the moſt elaborate precepts; it cannot be denied that Zollikofer has afforded exceedingly much in this reſpect likewiſe. A conſiderable number of young members of the univerſity eagerly preſſed to his diſcourſes, liſtening to him, as may well be imagined with the utmoſt attention, imperceptibly learning by example, how a ſubject ſhould be ſtudied and how it ſhould be handled, in order to contribute in any remarkable degree to the advancement of wiſdom and virtue among our fellow-creatures by the oratory of the pulpit. We may therefore indulge the pleaſing hope, that Zollikofer's genius will continue to operate not only throughout his native country, but likewiſe over many provinces of Germany,

many, through theſe his ſcholars, diſſeminating truth and happineſs among mankind to the lateſt poſterity.

Our worthy paſtor, conſidering that pſalmody and prayer form an eſſential part of public worſhip, undertook to make a collection of ſpiritual ſongs for the uſe of his congregation on a plan more ſuitable to the purpoſe and more edifying than the old one. In this he availed himſelf of the advice and aſſiſtance of his judicious friends, both in regard to the improvement of the former where it was practicable, and to the proper ſelection of hymns from the modern poets, particularly Gellert, Cramer and Kloppſtock. This appeared in the year 1766. His diſcourſes and prayers for the uſe of public and family worſhip were publiſhed in 1777, and were followed in 1785 by his exerciſes of devotion and prayers for the private uſe of reflecting and judicious chriſtians.

As he excelled in his doctrine, ſo alſo did he excel both in his ſocial and domeſtic conduct.

In humility and retirement, he purſued his path of life; never wiſhing to ſhine, his only aim was to be uſeful; becauſe in the exerciſe of that ſtern virtue which he taught he found his ſupreme delight. The poor and deſtitute, eſpecially thoſe of his congregation, beheld in him a father and a friend; though his bounty was by no means confined to them, it alſo extended to thoſe of other communions, relieving them either by his own donations or

through application to others. In this manner he did much good, far more than many of the rich, who indeed give liberally, but only ſo much as they can ſpare from their ſuperfluity without miſſing it; and theſe acts of beneficence to which he was moved by the tendereſt ſympathies of our nature, were regulated by the prudent maxims of reaſon and religion, ſo that his bounty partook of wiſdom as well as of ſenſibility. Numbers of people do much good in relieving the poor by their alms; but there they ſtop, without conſidering that everything in the world is not done by money. Zollikofer did incomparably more. His advice, his judgment, his interceſſion with others, his admonitions, his conſolation in misfortune were at the ſervice of all who applied for them, and he even went before their requeſts. Young men deſirous of knowledge, eagerly ſought his acquaintance, and all thoſe who enjoyed that benefit have honeſtly confeſſed that they derived from it material improvement both in heart and mind. Whatever he ſaid was true; every word he uttered might be relied on as conveying the real ſentiments of his heart; arrayed in the ſimple majeſty of truth, he ſought no other covering: and never did he commend or approve from complaiſance anything that was contrary to the conviction of his own mind, or that he ſaw could not be approved upon the ſtricteſt rules of morality. His gravity was attractive and engaging, charity itſelf was in its ſmiles, his converſation entertaining,

ing, often animated, his equal cheerfulneſs amiable and inoffenſive, and his raillery, in which he very rarely indulged, the mildeſt poſſible. To a very conſiderable compaſs of literary attainments and great brilliancy of imagination, were added in the character of Zollikofer, the moſt undeviating rectitude, the moſt amiable diſpoſition, and the moſt prepoſſeſſing manners. The whole tenour of his life was one pure, uninterrupted, captivating harmony of virtue and the ſweet enjoyment of the felicities ariſing from it. Among his other ſatisfactions he had that of being univerſally eſteemed, as of neceſſity it could not be otherwiſe. That happy mixture of ſerioufneſs and dignity with gentleneſs and affability; his own ſtrict courſe of virtue combined with ſo much indulgence and candour towards the failings of others; his heartfelt and firm conviction of the great truths he taught, which manifeſted itſelf in all his actions, in the whole tenour of his converſation as well as in his diſcourſes from the pulpit, without entertaining the ſlighteſt intolerance towards ſuch as differed from him in opinion, or arrogating the ſmalleſt ſuperiority over thoſe who poſſeſſed not the faculty of thinking for themſelves, or of fully comprehending every truth; his unwearied zeal to lead his auditors to the rigorous exerciſe of virtue, in his demands however never diſregarding the rights of humanity concerning what they could or could not do in theſe or the other circumſtances; his impartial eſtimation of

mankind, juſtly diſcriminating the opinions and principles upon which they acted, carefully tracing out their good qualities, and heartily rejoicing in every advantageous diſcovery of that nature — let the reader contemplate all this as combined in the character of Zollikofer, and then pronounce, whether real undiſſembled veneration, the general eſteem of all ranks and claſſes of perſons muſt not as inſeparably have attended his wiſdom and virtue as the ſhadow follows the ſubſtance. Even the wanton wit of thoſe who in the judgments they paſs on the miniſters of religion are not aſhamed to ſet aſide the reſpect that is due from man to man, was awed into ſilence at the name of Zollikofer.

Amidſt the evils ariſing from the operation of outward circumſtances, from which in the preſent world from the very ſettlement and condition of it, no mortal is exempt, he ſtill led a happy life: the wiſe man having the never failing ſource of his happineſs within himſelf, is conſtantly armed againſt the ſtrokes of worldly troubles; and even theſe, however great, are far leſs to him than to the majority of mankind, ſince the ideas he forms of them are totally different from theirs.

He was twice married. His firſt wife named Le Roy, was a lady of great underſtanding and conſiderable attainments. He was extremely fond of her, and his congregation witneſſed the manly tears he ſhed upon her grave. His ſecond, of the family of Sechehay, at Leipſick, was an uncommon

bleſſing

bleſſing to him during the laſt ſeven years of his life, and probably the world is indebted to her amiable and tender aſſiduities, for the prolongation of his life and his labours. Both marriages proved childleſs; providence, unqueſtionably, for ſome wiſe purpoſes unknown to us, not diſpenſing to the man who had thought and read ſo much on the nurture and education of youth, and even written ſeveral valuable pieces on that ſubject, the happineſs of applying his wiſe and excellent leſſons to practice.

For the ſpace of a year before his death, feeling his faculties conſiderably on the decline, and thinking himſelf no longer able to fulfil the duties of his office to his own ſatisfaction, he formed the reſolution to lay it down, and retire to the place of his nativity in Switzerland: but at the united requeſt of his congregation, who aſſured him that they would willingly on his account content themſelves with a diſcourſe from him every fortnight, he was induced to remain in his ſtation. His health even ſeemed to improve during the ſummer in conſequence of his having paſſed the intervals of his time in the country at the village of Gohlitz, not far from town. But in the following autumn it too plainly appeared that his recovery was only apparent. He ſtill however attended on his paſtoral functions, though with the utmoſt difficulty; till, at length, a few weeks before his death, he was obliged to apply for aſſiſtance to a foreign can-

didate for orders, who kindly took the charge of preaching upon him. His laſt illneſs was extremely painful; yet ever faithful to his convictions, he bore his ſufferings with the patience of a wiſe man who poſſeſſes the ſpirit that reſts upon itſelf, and the reſignation of a chriſtian, who looks beyond the grave and corruption to the world of retribution. On the 22d of January, 1788, he gently ſank into the arms of death, and was buried on the 25th. The whole of his numerous congregation, together with ſome hundreds of young ſtudents of the univerſity, and numbers of his auditors of the lutheran communion, attended his body to the grave, with every token of unfeigned ſorrow.

Serm. xi. line 1. read, *like all other teachers.*

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SERMON I.

Wherein the Dignity of Man conſiſts.

GOD, great and manifold are thy works in heaven and on earth: all abundant in wiſdom and benignity! Even we, Almighty, Allgracious, we alſo are the work of thy hands; and, of all the creatures of the earth, the foremoſt, the moſt glorious! Formed after thy likeneſs; capable of knowing thee, of loving thee, of having communion with thee; capable of underſtanding, of feeling, of enjoying all the beautiful works and all the effects of kindneſs, which thou haſt ſo liberally diffuſed throughout thy world, our abode; of elevating our minds to thee, the primordial fount of beauty and perfection, of approaching ever nearer to thee, of attaining continually to a cloſer and brighter reſemblance of thee, and in thee of enjoying ever purer ſatisfaction and felicity! — God, what is man, that thou haſt exalted him ſo far above the other inhabitants of the earth, endowed him with ſuch capacities and powers, allotted him this place in thy dominion, brought him ſo near to

thy ſon Jeſus and through him to thee, his father and our father, and opened to him ſuch proſpects in remote futurity in all the glories of thy creation! God, what joy, what tranſports ſhould it raiſe in our hearts that we are men; that we are thy children, thy image; that we are brethren of thy ſon Jeſus; that we are immortal, and may hope to become continually more perfect and continually more happy; with what gratitude, with what love towards thee, our creator, ſhould it not impreſs our ſouls; what lofty ſentiments kindle in us; to what good and great actions incite us! — Oh that this grand, this bliſsful ſentiment of our dignity and thy condeſcending love were ever preſent with us! Oh that it even now in a ſuperior degree were active and effective in us, thoroughly pervaded and warmed us, and ſo entirely took poſſeſſion of us, that it might never more by anything be weakened or ſuppreſſed! No, conſtantly may we be impreſſed with the nobleneſs of our nature, our origin from thee and our high appointment, and conſtantly think and live conformably with what we now are and can do, and what we hereafter ſhall be and may perform! Bleſs in this view our meditations on theſe important doctrines; let thy ſpirit ſtrengthen and exalt our ſpirits, that they may feel the whole value of their privileges and powers, and rejoice in their exiſtence and their connection with thee! We aſk it as the diſciples of him, who taught us to addreſs thee as, Our father, &c.

PSALM

PSALM viii. 5.

Thou haſt made him a little lower than the angels, and haſt crowned him with glory and honour.

MAN may be conſidered in two different points of view, my pious hearers. In one we find him a very limited, feeble, defective being. Little ſuperior, at beſt, to the beaſts of the field, in many reſpects apparently below them: more circumſcribed, more impotent, more unhappy than they. Conſidered in another light, he diſcovers the faireſt diſpoſitions, and the greateſt capacities. Look at the effects of his external force; they indicate a being far more elevated than the inanimate or the brute creation. He performs actions which excite and deſerve univerſal admiration; but the operations and productions of his mind, are evidences of his affinity with the Father of Spirits, and prove him to be, in a more exalted ſenſe, the offspring of God.

Conſidered on one ſide, human nature appears indeed a pitiable object. And they who thus view it, take all poſſible pains to diſmay us with deriſion, by repreſenting our pretenſions to dignity as the fancies of an overweening pride. On the other ſide, man ſeems to merit the greateſt eſteem and veneration. And ſuch as regard him in this light, exalt him far above all ſurrounding creatures, make

him capable of every excellence, and fitted for the higheſt attainments.

Now, on which ſide, my devout audience, ſhall we contemplate man? Doubtleſs, we ſhould ſtudy and underſtand him on both, if we would judge rightly of the ends for which he was made; if we would neither be preſumptuous through pride, nor diſheartened by conſcious abaſement. — —

It ſeems to me, however, as if human nature was not frequently enough conſidered on its fair and advantageous ſide; though it ſhould oftener be ſo than on the other. Limitations, weakneſſes, defects, and imperfections, cannot eaſily be forgotten; the ſentiment of them is too painful and too importunate, and their baneful influence on our felicity is too multiform and too apparent to be denied. But talents that are not drawn forth, faculties that are not exerted, abilities that are not produced in action, or only operate in ſilence and obſcurity, may eaſily be overlooked, may eaſily be neglected. And then there is a vaſt difference between theſe two ſides, both as to ſcope and duration. Infirmities, weakneſſes and imperfections, which may be gradually corrected, and, in part at leaſt, be removed; which belong not ſo eſſentially to human nature, deſerve not therefore ſo much attention, as capacities and faculties and prerogatives, which not only at preſent greatly overbalance them, but are calculated to continue for ever, and conſtantly to effectuate greater perfection and more exalted

exalted happineſs. Certainly then the man that accuſtoms himſelf to conſider human nature, rather on this ſide than the other, will judge far more rightly, think far more nobly, act far better and more virtuouſly, than he who ſuffers the ſentiment of his meanneſs and infirmity to be ever before him. Well then, my devout audience; we will chuſe that point of view which promiſes us the moſt advantage and the greateſt happineſs.

We will conſider the dignity of man. I have often diſcourſed to you of it before. Oft have I encouraged you to the ſentiment and the aſſertion of it. But perhaps this comprehenſive term has not always excited the moſt perſpicuous ideas in your mind. We will now more diſtinctly diſcriminate the leading particulars wherein it conſiſts.

By the dignity of man, we are in general to underſtand, whatever is eminently great and honourable in his nature, his ſituation and his appointment; all that gives him an eminent value in the ſight of God and of all intelligent beings. A dignity, which is grounded on his intrinſically noble and generous ſentiments, his privileges and his powers, and is diſplayed in the excellency of intellect and power of action peculiar to him. A dignity which forces from us ſome ſuch exclamations to the deity as thoſe of the Pſalmiſt: Thou haſt made him a little lower than the angels, and haſt crowned him with glory and honour.

Wherein then does the dignity of man conſiſt or what gives him the dignity he has? And how and

whereby does he exhibit his dignity; or, what does it produce within him and without him? — Theſe are the principal queſtions we have now to anſwer.

Underſtanding, freedom, activity, an always progreſſive perfection, immortality, the relation in which he ſtands to God, and to his ſon Jeſus, the ſtation he fills on the earth, and what he is and does in regard to all theſe: this compoſes the dignity of man; this gives him his eminently great worth.

Man is ennobled by underſtanding and reaſon. Theſe form the firſt and chief ground of his dignity. Theſe exalt him far above all the other creatures of the earth. By theſe he is related to the pure intelligences of heaven; by theſe he ſoars to the great eternal cauſe of all. He is not altogether carnal, not altogether animal; not like the beaſts of the field adheſive to the earth; not incapable like them of reſiſting the impulſes of external things. He can lift his eyes on high, and roam in ſpirit above terreſtrial and viſible objects: he can contemplate himſelf; diſtinguiſh himſelf from all the objects around him, and ſecern his thoughts from that which thinks within him; can diſcriminate the paſt, the preſent and the future, in the conceptions of his capacious mind; has an inward and clear conſciouſneſs of his exiſtence and his operations; can inquire into the cauſes and views of things, inveſtigate their proportion and affinity to each other, view them in their connections and in their conſequences; and, from what he knows and ſees, can judge in a thouſand caſes of what he knows and ſees not yet. And

how

how comprehenſive is his intellect! How far does his reaſon venture, and how often does it ſucceed in its boldeſt reſearches! Who can compute the multitude, the numberleſs multitude of ideas, of judgements, of concluſions, of remarks and obſervations which ariſe, which aſſociate, accumulate, coaleſce, concatenate, intermingle in the human mind, during its ſhort ſojourn on this terreſtrial globe, and ſupply it with matter for everlaſting reflection? And what is there in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, in the ſea, and in all deep places, in the viſible or the inviſible world, in the region of poſſibilities and realities, in the obſcurity of the paſt and in the night of the future, what is there that does not excite the curioſity of the human mind, that does not employ its faculties, that it does not endeavour to know, to fathom, to explain, to compare or to combine with what it already knows? Allowing that it frequently miſtakes, that it often takes appearances for reality, that it diſcovers and knows comparatively but little, that in more than one reſpect it is totally ignorant: yet who can fail of perceiving the value of what it really does know and by its faculties perform; who the ſtill greater value of its inceſſant endeavours after what it knows not yet, and is not able to perform? Who can be blind to the dignity which this confers on man?

Liberty, my pious hearers, moral free agency, is another characteriſtic of man; another ſource of his dignity. While the ſun, the moon, the ſtars

and all the hoſt of heaven, move and act and revolve in the regions of ſpace by mechanical laws unknown to them; while the animals blindly purſue their irreſiſtible inſtincts, and are entirely dependent on impreſſions from without; man is not abſolutely ſubjected to thoſe laws, nor impelled by theſe inſtincts. He can controul, alter, or decline thoſe laws in a thouſand different ways, in regard to his motions and actions: he can withſtand, or totally ſurmount theſe inſtincts. He can conſider, compare, ſelect, reſolve, execute his reſolves, or relinquiſh and change them for others. He diſtinguiſhes truth from error, good from bad, and ſemblance from reality; ſubmits not to be impoſed on by every ſpecious outſide, every deceitful luſtre, every deſirable or terrific appearance: he ſtops not at the preſent moment; ſees to the remoter conſequences of things; and is neither neceſſitated blindly to truſt to the informations of his ſenſes, nor implicitly to follow his feelings as they ariſe. He chuſes and does that which he apprehends to be right and good, and beſt for the occaſion; he rejects and avoids that which he holds to be unjuſt and wicked, or productive of more harm than good; and directs himſelf in his choice and his conduct, by the perceptions of his intellect, by the light of his reaſon. Theſe perceptions indeed may often deceive him; this light may ſometimes lead him aſtray. But then the way is not ſhut to his return. He can diſcover the fallacy, be aware of his error, repent of his choice,

choice, alter his conduct, and learn by these sad experiences to act more prudently and freely for the future. He thus guides, directs and governs himself, and in some measure likewise the external objects around him. Thus is he neither a blind efficient being in the system of the universe, nor the slave of his own temperament, nor the sport of diverse outward causes and casual impulses. Thus he does nothing but what he wills, and nothing can compel him to will anything but what he at each respective time holds to be the best. And what a special privilege does this give him over all the inanimate as well as the merely sensitive but irrational creation! What a value, what a dignity must all his determinations and actions acquire from their being peculiarly his own determinations, his own actions, the principles, aims, consistency and connection whereof he knows, and can give an account of to himself and to others! How much more valuable must one good action of a man be, than the whole benign influence of the sun, unconscious of itself, and of all its effects, diffused throughout the system!

Activity, the most diversified, the most indefatigable activity, is a third characteristic of man, a third source of his dignity. Indeed everything in nature is incessantly moving; the inanimate as well as the living, the animal no less than the rational world. Everything has force, and all force effects what it can and must produce. Perfect inertitude, immoveable sloth, complete death, seem to be excluded from the universe of God's creation. But where shall we find

that he is not capable of acting ſtill more powerfully and beneficially? And when do his impulſes and endeavours to do ſo ceaſe? Who in all theſe regards can ſet bounds to the human mind, which it may not hope from its prediſpoſitions and abilities, and the will of its maker to tranſcend?

Is he not immortal? Yes, man, and this is the fifth ground of his dignity, man is deſigned for immortality. He is to continue without end, to live forever, to live eternally as a rational, free, extremely active being, as a being continually preſſing towards perfection! — Immortality, my dear friends, everlaſting life, what a prerogative, what a dignity! All the beauties of nature ſhall fade and periſh, ſuns and ſtars ſhall loſe their luſtre, the living founts of light ſhall be exhauſted, the whole viſible world ſhall be immerſed in night: but man ſurvives them all, and finds in himſelf, in the world of ſpirits, in God the father of ſpirits, far more than all the viſible world can give. And where then are the limits that are to confine him, this ever-living, this ever-acting being? What degree of light, what meaſure of power, what rank of felicity ſhall render him incapable of walking in a ſtill brighter light, of obtaining ſtill greater powers, of enjoying ſtill purer bliſs? No, here no perfect ſtop, no fixt and immoveable point of perfection can be conceived. No, everlaſting tendency and travel forwards, everlaſting improvement in all that is beautiful and good and deſirable, everlaſting approximation to

conſummate,

conſummate, but ſtill unattainable perfection: this is the appointment, this the glorious lot of man; this the greateſt, ſovereign dignity of a created being!

Man is likewiſe, my brethren, and this adds infinitely to his dignity, this ſets it in its perfect light, man is the image of God, he derives his deſcent from the everlaſting father, is his offspring and bears the viſible traces of his divine original and his fellowſhip with deity. His underſtanding is a ray of divine intelligence; his power an efflux from that of the Almighty; his activity ſomething ſimilar to that of unwearied omnipotence; his capacity of becoming continually more perfect, is a capacity of approaching inceſſantly nearer to the divine nature; his immortality is a ſimilitude of the interminable duration of the Eternal, and the means of obtaining an everlaſting communion with him. As often as he conceives truth; as often as he wills and does good; as often as he perceives, admires and promotes order and beauty; as often as he diffuſes love and joy and happineſs around him: ſo often does he conceive and will and effect and feel and act in a godlike manner; ſo often does he purſue the work of his creator and father; ſo often does he promote the deſigns of the ſovereign being; ſo often does he obtain a taſte of pure divine felicity; and the more he does ſo, the oftener he acts in this manner, the greater is his ſimilitude with God, the brighter is the image of deity reſplendent in him, the leſs are we able to miſtake his origin from above,

above, and the dignity of his nature. It is then that God viſibly acts, as it were in him and through him; by him gives teſtimony of the truth; inſtructs and reveals himſelf to mankind by him; by him maintains the cauſe of virtue; by him ſpeaks comfort to the troubled ſoul; by him pours balm into the wounded heart; by him adminiſters help and ſupport to the wretched, diſtributes bread to the hungry and gives ſtrength to the weak; by him he beautifies his world; and through him diſſeminates more life and joy. And to be ſuch an inſtrument in the hand of God; to have ſuch an aſſimilation with him, the Allperfect, thus to approximate the divinity, and in a manner to be his ſubſtitute on earth: muſt not this confer a great, or rather the greateſt dignity on man?

This brings him ſo near to the only begotten of the Father, to his ſon Jeſus; this connects him ſo cloſely, ſo intimately with him in whom the Father is well pleaſed, whom he has conſtituted Lord over all, and who is the conſummate pattern of human perfection. And what a dignity does man acquire from his affinity with Jeſus, whom he reveres as his reſtorer and chief! To have him, the complete image of the Father, this reflex beam of divine effulgence, for his relation, his brother, his friend, his captain and leader, his lord; to be as ſtrictly, as indiſſolubly, united with him, as the members of the body are united with the head; to be ſo beloved of him as no friend ever loved another, or can

love

love him, to be ſo unanimous with him, and to carry on the ſame deſigns, to work with him as he does with the Father; in more than one reſpect to repreſent him on the earth among mankind, and to proſecute the work he there commenced: how much muſt this exalt the dignity of man! What honour, what ſplendor, what eminence muſt it give him! What may not creatures, whom God has ſo highly favoured, expect at his hands! What degree of perfection and happineſs may not be attainable by them!

Laſtly conſider man in his outward form, and in his relations to the earth. Conſider the place he occupies upon the globe; what he is and does with all its other inhabitants; and in this regard alſo you cannot miſapprehend his dignity. See how he ſtands erect and conſcious, amidſt all the inferior creatures; how exalted and preeminent he riſes above them; how all proclaim him the ſovereign of the globe and its inhabitants, the ſubſtitute of its author and the prieſt of nature! With what a comprehenſive view does he ſurvey, diſtribute, regulate, connect, and apprehend all ſurrounding objects; now darting his eye from earth to heaven, and then looking down from heaven upon the earth with ſentiments of delight; affectionately cheriſhing everything that lives and moves; his ſoft ſuſceptible heart expands to the innumerable ſtreams of pleaſure and delight, which from all ſides flow to meet him, till he is rapt in the delicious ſentiments of love and adoration! —

How

How graceful, how auguſt his port! How ſignificant and expreſſive every lineament of his face, every attitude, every movement of his perſon! What emphaſis in the language of his eye! His whole ſoul appears in one glance of it, and with an irreſiſtible energy at one time commands reverence, at another ſubmiſſion and obedience, and at another love; now inſpiring courage and reſolution, then pleaſure and ſatisfaction in all about him! How often by a look does he diſarm malice, defeat the ſchemes of injuſtice, drive ſorrow from the breaſt of the mourner, and dart life and heavenly joy where darkneſs and diſtreſs prevailed. Who can here avoid perceiving the dignity, the majeſty of man! —

And who can deny, that all things on earth relate to man, that all are animated, beautified, diſpoſed, connected as means of human happineſs, and for the glory of God? How extenſively do the influences and operations of man, either mediately or immediately prevail; what tributes does he exact from the very elements and the latent powers of nature! And what revolutions and transformations does he produce! What deſert ſo wild but becomes a paradiſe by his preſence and induſtry; and what paradiſe is not rendered more paradiſaical by his reſidence and culture! Repreſent to yourſelf the earth without mankind, without intelligent creatures, and what do you diſcover? Certainly ſtill many great beauties; but more ſavage than gentle, more tremendous than delightful beauties; ſtill

indeed much life, but life without conſciouſneſs, without reflection, without appropriate enjoyment, without reference to the author of it. No, nature is beautiful, enchantingly beautiful; but man adorns it, collects about him the ſingly ſcattered beauties, and ſees and feels, and enjoys and delights in them. Nature is fruitful, inexhauſtibly fruitful; but man improves her fertility, guides it, and gives it the moſt generally uſeful direction. Nature is full of life; but man diverſifies, elevates and refines that life, and is happy in the enjoyment of it. Thus is he the lord of this part of the creation; the prieſt of nature, from whoſe heart, from whoſe lips the thankſgiving and praiſe of all inanimate and living creatures, aſcend to heaven; the central point in which all that ſurrounds him unite, and all attain their end. — — Would you eſtimate his powerful and benign influence on all things, my pious hearers, only compare the regions inhabited by man with thoſe wherein he has not fixed his abode; compare the european and aſiatic luxuriance of gardens and fields, with the wilds of America. Here nature languiſhes for want of cultivation: there plenty and joy meet the traveller with ſmiles. Here impenetrable foreſts, and vaſt impaſſable marſhes cover the earth; its undirected and uſeleſs fertility, ſtifles and deſtroys itſelf; and peſtilential exhalations obſcure its ſurface: there the ſun, unimpeded, diffuſes its light and heat; the waters flow in pleaſant ſtreams; the

noiſome vapours are diſperſed; the winds are admitted to refreſh and purify the atmoſphere; and the weeds are eradicated from among the uſeful plants. Where man is not and does not act, there are trackleſs waſtes; there chill ſloth and ſullen ſilence and horrid death prevail: where man appears, where he lives and acts, there he makes him paths, there he decks the earth with flowers and fruits, there the air brings health and ſtrength and fragrant odours with it, there he animates and gladdens all, there is heard the lowing of the herds and the expreſſive joyfulneſs of man. And how much more beautiful, more glorious is nature now; how rich and beneficent under the guiding hand, and the genial attentions and culture of man! All is now the mirror of the deity, the ſchool of wiſdom, the ſource of pleaſure, the means of exerciſe and perfection, the foretaſte of purer joys and higher happineſs! How connected now is the viſible with the inviſible, the preſent with the future, the terreſtrial world with the world of ſpirits, and the creature with the creator! —

And man, my devout auditors, who effects and produces all this; man, who poſſeſſes ſuch an underſtanding, ſuch liberty, ſuch activity, ſuch capacities for progreſſively increaſing perfection; a being immortal; a being in the ſimilitude of God; ſo intimately united with his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and ſuſtaining ſuch a part upon the globe, and filling ſuch a character in regard to the other creatures: muſt

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not man poſſeſs great dignity, a pre-eminent value in the ſight of God and of all thinking beings?

Oh judge then more juſtly of mankind, judge more juſtly of thyſelf, thou, who probably only beholdeſt thyſelf on the ſide of weakneſs and imperfection, and conſidereſt not the ſuperiority and the excellency of thy nature! Treat mankind, and treat thyſelf conformably with truth. Debaſe not the human race, under pretence of exalting their ſovereign and father, God; and when thou ſpeakeſt of the corruption and miſery of man, forget not however that he is the work of the Almighty's hand, that the ignominy of the creature can never reflect honour on the creator; forget not, that dimneſs of ſight is not total blindneſs, that ſhades give relief to light, that great miſuſe of power implies great power, that the firſt act of life is not the whole of life, that the tottering, feeble infant will arrive at manhood, and then will accompliſh much; and that the God, who, on the reviſion of all that he had made, pronounced it good, and beheld it with delight, will certainly conduct all to its proper end, to the ſummit of perfection.

No, apprehend and recognize thy dignity, thy faculties, thy privileges, o man, and apprehend and recognize them with a cheerful and a grateful heart! It is not imagination, it is not pride; it is conſciouſneſs founded on truth; and this ſenſe of thy dignity will not elate thee with pride, ſo long as thou retaineſt it, ſo long as

thou canſt lift thine eyes and raiſe thy mind to him who has given thee theſe ablities, theſe prerogatives, who gives thee them afreſh at every moment, and to whoſe glory thou ſhouldſt be and do all that thou art and doſt. No, apprehend and recognize the whole value of thy intelligent nature, the whole worth of thy ſuperior talents and capacities and powers! Elſe canſt thou not uſe them worthily; canſt not become, not do, not enjoy, that which thou mayſt become and do and enjoy according to thy nature and thy appointment; elſe canſt thou not render thy creator the gratitude, nor perform the ſervice to thy fellow-creatures, which thou oweſt to him and to them. No, thou muſt be reſpectable to thyſelf, and all men muſt be reſpectable to thee. Each is an important, a neceſſary link in the chain of things; each a moſt ſerviceable, indiſpenſable being, on which all acts, and which reacts on all; whoſe influence, however contracted the ſphere of it may ſeem, is immenſely large, and its activity continuing for ever.

But let not the proper ſenſe of thy dignity be an abſtract apprehenſion of thy mind. Let it animate all thy ſentiments, expand and warm thy heart, and diſplay itſelf in all thy actions. Think juſtly and greatly; act freely and generouſly; be conſtantly more and more active in juſtice and beneficence; purſue unremittedly higher perfection; live as a creature that is not wholly to die; that is to live forever; endeavour to acquire daily a cloſer aſſimi-

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lation with God, and to approach nearer to the expreſs image of him, his ſon Jeſus Chriſt; fulfil the functions appointed thee on earth, there act and rule with wiſdom and benignity, and continually diſſeminate more life and joy and happineſs around thee. So wilt thou do honour to mankind, and to God their creator and father, and incontrovertibly evince, that God has crowned thee with glory and honour, and has made thee lower than the angels only for this period of time.

SERMON II.

What is in Oppoſition to the Dignity of Man.

GOD, thou haſt done much, infinitely much for us thy creatures and children! Thou haſt crowned us with glory and honour, endowed us with ſpecial privileges, and haſt made us but little inferior to the bleſſed intelligences of heaven! What grand prediſpoſitions, what extenſive capacities and powers do we not diſcover in our nature! And what means, what incitements to the expanſion and uſe of them does not thy kind providence daily grant us! how much good might we not do and enjoy; how wiſe, how virtuous, how happy even now be and become, if we thought and acted ever ſuitably to the dignity and the prerogatives which thou haſt conferred upon us! O heavenly father, how ought we to be aſhamed before thee and before ourſelves, that we are not wiſer, not better, not happier: that we ſo ſlowly advance towards the perfection to which thou haſt made us capable of attaining; that we aſſert not more worthily the honour of humanity! Ah, many of us even

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wander ever farther from thee and from the true end of their creation, debaſe themſelves ever lower by follies and ſins, and render themſelves continually more unworthy of the rank and ſtation which thou haſt aſſigned them! Ah, ſtill much darkneſs, much thraldom, much ſloth and reluctance to good, much neglect and much miſuſe of abilities, ſtill many low ſentiments and actions degrade us men, the glorious work of thy hands! We lament that we are ſo deeply fallen from our dignity, and have ſo much obſcured the luſtre of thy image in us! Oh that we might all riſe from this depth of guilt and miſery, and be renewed after thy likeneſs! The ſentiment of our ſullied dignity is not yet entirely ſuppreſſed in our hearts! Deſires and endeavours after higher improvement yet frequently remind us of our origin from thee, of our affinity to thee, of what we might be and become! Oh do thou thyſelf ſtrengthen and quicken by the influences of thy ſpirit, this generous ſentiment in our breaſts! Let theſe deſires after ſuperior attainments ever become more ardent, theſe endeavours more continued and efficient! Reſcue our ſpirits from the dominion of ſenſuality, raiſe them above everything that is earthly and viſible, bring them ever nearer to thee, their creator and father, and let them ſeek and find in thee their ſovereign perfection and felicity! Bleſs our meditations on thoſe truths that are intended now to rouſe and invigorate our minds.

Let us willingly receive and retain them in a good heart. All this we implore of thee in the name of thy ſon Jeſus; and confiding in his promiſes, we further addreſs thee in the words which he taught us to uſe when we pray unto thee: Our father, &c.

PSALM viii. 6.

Thou haſt made him a little lower than the angels, and haſt crowned him with glory and honour.

THE greater man's dignity is, my pious hearers, the more ſtrongly is he bound to aſſert it, and to think and act in conformity to it. The greater his dignity, the more does everything that is in oppoſition to it, that leſſens or obſcures its ſplendour, debaſe and degrade him. Better, far better is it, my dear friends, to fill the loweſt place, than to be exalted above others, and to diſgrace oneſelf by low ſentiments and ſhameful actions; better, far better, to live in obſcurity and be loſt in the crowd, than to be conſpicuous beyond others, and to walk in the light, but by error, folly, and vice, to betray a greater love for darkneſs: better, far better, to have meaner capacities and abilities, than great capacities and abilities to miſapply them, or not to uſe them at all: better, far better, to poſſeſs no privileges, than to fully them by unworthy behaviour,

behaviour, or forfeit them by negligence. And may not this be the caſe with numbers of mankind, and poſſibly with ſome among us, my pious hearers? We enjoy ſpecial privileges, as men, great capacities and abilities: we diſplay a ſuperiority in various ways, over the other inhabitants of the earth: we fill a more elevated rank on the ſcale of being, live and act in a higher and a larger ſphere than they: we are endowed with a certain noble grandeur, a peculiar dignity which exalts us far above every thing about us. No one that has impartially conſidered the nature and the deſtination of man, and knows and has a proper ſenſe of himſelf, is able to contradict this fact. Recollect only our laſt conſideration of this ſubject. Which of us then did not recognize the dignity of man, did not admire it, did not rejoice in it? But how ſeldom is it diſplayed in its perfect purity, in all its luſtre! How oft is it veiled, like the ſun, with thick and murky clouds, or obſcured by the impenetrable opacity of matter! How often does man forget, belie, and debaſe his dignity! How often does he think and act in ſuch a manner as if he were not that reaſonable, that free, that active, that emulative, that immortal, that godlike creature; as if he were not the wiſe and beneficent ruler of the earth, the pious prieſt of nature; but exactly the reverſe of all this! And how low muſt it degrade him in the eyes of all intelligent creatures, how low in his own, when he compares what he is and does, with what he might be and is able to do!

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Would he but frequently make theſe compariſons, and not decline the ſalutary ſhame and confuſion it muſt neceſſarily produce! My preſent deſign is to facilitate this buſineſs to ſuch of you as are fallen from your dignity, or have much leſſened or obſcured it by your ſentiments and your conduct. To this end, I ſhall ſhew you what is derogatory to the dignity of man. Let every one compare his own ſentiments and his own behaviour with it; judge them both with ſtrict impartiality; not quickly turn away his eyes from thoſe things which deform and debaſe him, and which he muſt now feel to degrade and diſgrace him; but by theſe painful recollections let him rouze and apply himſelf as ſoon as poſſible to become what he is not yet, and immediately to ſet about doing what he has hitherto left undone!

Intelligence and reaſon ennoble mankind; he therefore acts derogatory to his dignity, he debaſes and degrades himſelf, when he neglects to cultivate his underſtanding, and his reaſon, when he neglects to uſe them to thoſe purpoſes for which they were given him by the creator; when truth and error, ſemblance and reality, are things indifferent to him, when he is contented with fewer or with inferior attainments and perceptions, than ſuch as he might acquire by his abilities, by his capacities, by his ſtation, by the peculiar means and opportunities he has or may have to that end. — Where is then your dignity, how does your noble-

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neſs appear, you who avoid that retirement and ſilence which is ſo favourable and generally ſo indiſpenſable to reflection; you who benumb your intellect by an unceaſing round of diſſipation, diſtraction and tumultuous amuſement; who ſo ſeldom attain to any clear, inward conſciouſneſs of yourſelves and your condition; who ſo ſeldom exerciſe yourſelves in conſideration or reflection; turn your thoughts conſtantly more without than within; exiſt more by the opinions and judgments of others, than live in that ſelf-ſentiment which is the neceſſary concomitant of habitual meditation? Where is your dignity, how does your nobleneſs appear, you who reſt merely in what you ſee and hear and feel, who ſo ſeldom inquire into the cauſes and reaſons and views of things; and, like the beaſts of the field, are ſolely occupied in enjoying the preſent, forgetful of the paſt and loſing ſight of the future? Where is your dignity, how does your nobleneſs appear, you, who find it ſo difficult to raiſe yourſelves above viſible and earthly things, who ſo ſoon feel fatigued and diſguſted with any ſerious reflection on God and religion, on duty and virtue, on death and immortality, on the appointment and the great concerns of man; to whom rational exerciſes of devotion, that nobleſt elevation of the human mind, afford ſo little nutriment and pleaſure, and who are more delighted with what affects and flatters the ſenſes, than with any communications with the ſpiritual world, and with God, the father of ſpirits? Where is your dignity,

dignity, how does the nobleneſs of your nature appear; you, who, with the beſt means and opportunities of inveſtigating and thinking for yourſelves, only think as others think and talk as others talk; who allow yourſelves to be governed merely by the prejudices of education, of appearance, of faſhion, who blindly embrace and revere every prevailing opinion; who are conſtantly whirled about in the ſame narrow circle of falſe, obſcure and extremely defective conceptions and notions; who ſtifle your natural curioſity; who neither ſeek nor acquire any better information; who remain ignorant in regard to ſo many important matters, and probably even applaud yourſelves for your ignorance; and therefore in general take ſo little pains to cultivate your underſtanding, and to enlarge and correct your knowledge? Is not this egregiouſly to miſtake, to diſown and neglect your nobleſt privileges?

Would you maintain your dignity, you muſt uſe the underſtanding and the reaſon which the creator has granted you, and whereby he has ſo far exalted you above the other inhabitants of the earth; cultivate them with care; let the expanſion, the invigorating, and the higher flight of your mind be at leaſt as momentous a concern to you, as the nouriſhment and the embelliſhment of your perſon; exerciſe your reflection on all that you ſee and do; conſtantly retain the clear conſciouſneſs of yourſelf, and avoid everything which blunts and ſuppreſſes that ſentiment; reſt not in the ſemblances of things, in their outward

outward appearance, their firſt apparent effects; ſtrive to find out their real quality, dive into their origin, into their views and their deſigns, conſider them in their connections and conſequences; direct frequently your eyes and your heart upwards, raiſe them to the firſt eternal cauſe of all things, keep up your cloſe correſpondence with the father of ſpirits, and thereby perform what no other creature on this terreſtrial globe can do; let not ſenſuality ever weigh down your ſpirit to the earth; let not ſloth ever hinder you from inveſtigating the truth; and be faithful in the uſe of all the means which providence affords you, to the rectification of your perceptions, and the increaſe of your knowledge.

Farther, whatever, my pious hearers, oppoſes the freedom of man, whatever contracts and prevents its uſe, militates againſt the dignity of man; diſhonours, debaſes him, and renders him unworthy of the ſtation he occupies among the creatures of God. But are you indeed free; do you maintain by your freedom the dignity of man, you who cannot withſtand the impreſſions, the charms, any ſtronger impulſe of external objects, who do only what is agreeable to your eyes and delightful to your heart; you who never refuſe or reject, or cannot refuſe and reject without conflict and violence, what pleaſes your palate, flatters your ſenſes, or gratifies your animal appetites? — Are you free, do you maintain by your freedom the dignity of man, you who ſcarcely ever ſee with your own eyes, ſcarcely ever act from your own perſuaſions,

perſuaſions, who have ſcarce any ſettled principles, and follow no fixed rule in your conduct; you who are blindly ſwayed by the prevalence of cuſtom, the tyranny of faſhion, and the force of example; are conſtantly inquiring after, and conſtantly directing yourſelves by, what is held to be true and beautiful and right and good, more than by what is really and intrinſically true and beautiful and right and good? — Are you free, do you maintain by your freedom the dignity of man, you who ſuffer yourſelves to be dazzled by the luſtre of gold, the ſplendour of ſtation, the richneſs of dreſs, to be captivated by every fair appearance, to be deluded by every impoſture, to be deceived by every pretence, to ſtart at every chimera of the fancy, to follow every ſyren voice; and are unable to ſurmount any conſiderable impediment in your way, to withſtand any not abſolutely common temptation to ill? — Are you free, do you maintain by your freedom the dignity of man, you whoſe love and hatred, whoſe hope and fear, whoſe joy and ſorrow, whoſe good and ill humour, whoſe opinions and reſolves, whoſe whole behaviour in general depends almoſt entirely on outward things; almoſt on every extrinſic accident, on every company, on every ſlight alteration in the body or in the weather, ſo as one while to make you think thus, and at another otherwiſe; who are ſo ſeldom in agreement with yourſelves, ſo ſeldom do that which you had reſolved to do, and neglect that which you had determined to neglect? — Are you free, do you maintain by your freedom the dignity of

of man, you who are in bondage to vice; who ſuffer yourſelves to be ſo tyrannized by ſome baſe unworthy paſſion, that you follow its impulſes with implicit obedience, comply with its orders to do things at which your heart revolts, which your reaſon and conſcience condemn? — Are you free, do you maintain by your freedom the dignity of man, you who diſown the rights of mankind, and their natural equality; who obſequiouſly bow down before greatneſs and power, who implicitly revere their opinions, juſtify their actions, and ſubmit to their commands; who tremble at every frown, at every threat of the mighty; who purchaſe their favour by cringing flattery, by criminal complacency, and are entirely dependent on the looks and caprice of feeble mortals? —

No, your freedom, that noble, that ineſtimable privilege of man, is gone, at leaſt extremely impaired, entirely obſcured; is rather natural temper and capacity, than an operative, active energy. Ye are ſlaves, ſlaves to the ſenſes, ſlaves to accident, ſlaves to men, ſlaves to your luſts and appetites; and, while this is your conduct, you reduce yourſelves to the level of the beaſts of the field, and the dignity of man is ſcarcely diſcernible in you; only now and then a feeble ray of your luſtre appears through the thick cloud by which it is eclipſed. Would you have it ſhine forth again in all its ſplendour? Oh then break the chains of that bondage by which ſenſuality holds you captive; make uſe of the

the reflection which the creator has given you; learn to act with thought and conſideration; truſt not to the firſt impreſſions of things, to the firſt cravings that ſtir within you; in all your determinations conſult experience, reaſon, and the revealed will of God; hearken to the voice of your conſcience; and never act againſt your own conviction, never in oppoſition to what you muſt acknowledge to be right and fit. Endeavour to acquire a certain firmneſs and conſiſtency in your thoughts, your inclinations, your actions; which is the foundation of all true liberty, the completeſt ſecurity againſt all ſervility and bondage, an infallible feature of human dignity.

If that natural activity, which is conſtantly more or leſs operative in man, and can never be entirely deſtroyed, be another characteriſtic feature of his dignity; then thirdly everything muſt be contrary to it which enervates, ſuppreſſes, enthrals, or gives it a perverſe and pernicious direction. And what numberleſs faults are men guilty of in this reſpect, by which they debaſe themſelves, and diſhonour their nature! On one hand, are men who ſedulouſly avoid all attentive and ſerious reflection, all exertion of their bodily or mental powers, all inquiry that demands any trouble, any pains, or any deep inveſtigation; who ſhudder as it were at any labour, at any intricate buſineſs, at any conſiderable undertaking; always imagining themſelves to be weaker than they are, almoſt entirely neglecting to uſe their faculties for fear of exhauſting them; and to the

remoteſt danger of injuring their lives or health, of giving up the ſlighteſt conveniences, ſacrifice every duty and every opportunity of doing good, and of being uſeful to the community; who are ever panting after reſt, and ſeek their felicity in idleneſs or in paſſively ſubmitting the mind to the impreſſions which it receives, and to be acted upon by outward objects; are governed by accidents, and pleaſe themſelves in the idea of it, without counteracting them, and giving as readily and as much as they are fain to receive; men, who complain, and probably arraign the conduct of providence, becauſe man is ordained to eat bread in the ſweat of his brow; becauſe all he has is to be acquired, purchaſed, earned and extorted by painful induſtry; becauſe he has ſo many obſtacles to ſurmount, ſo many difficulties to encounter, ſo many foes to contend with, in his way to peace and happineſs, becauſe he muſt often watch and think and conſider and provide for himſelf and for others. — Some again there are who employ and waſte their powerful impulſe to action, that excellent energy that ſtirs within them, wherewith they might do ſo much good to themſelves and to others, in mere trifles; ever buſied, ever turmoiling, and yet bring nothing to effect, nothing that is worthy of them, nothing that might be uſeful to ſociety, nothing the memory whereof might ſolace and reward them after death; men, who, as if they were always children, trifle and loiter and ſport and ſquander

away their whole lives, employed ſolely in what relates to the decoration of their perſons, to the diſplay of their exterior attractions, to figuring in the faſhionable circles, acting a ſhining part in ſociety, and thus neglecting their moſt important concerns. — Others there are, who are very active, but active in wickedneſs; who bring much to paſs, but ſeldom any good; who ſow peſtilential ſeeds on all ſides, lay ſtumbling-blocks in the way of innocence, ſpread ſnares for unſuſpecting integrity, diſturb domeſtic and ſocial harmony, fan or feed the fire of diſcord, meddle with all things and perplex them all; who, from a miſplaced activity, would do everything themſelves, and thereby prevent others from doing it better. —

Ye who think and act in this manner, who ſo ſuppreſs your propenſity to action, or give it ſo wrong a direction, awake from your ſlumbers, be aſhamed of your ſloth, if you would aſſert the dignity of your nature. At preſent your life is no more than a dream; you can have no rational joys; you poſſeſs your eminent powers in vain, or fruſtrate their ends by miſapplication. To live like a man, means, to uſe our activity, to be conſcious of our actions, and to do as much good as we can. To reſt, like a man, does not mean to be idle, does not imply inaction, but to turn from ſevere to lighter employments, and to rejoice in the ſucceſs of the completed taſk. Would you not vegetate like the plants, not exiſt like the inferior animals, but live like rational

rational creatures, and enjoy that honourable repoſe which is worthy of man; be active, and augment your induſtry, but be active and induſtrious in virtue; lead a buſy life, but be buſy in beneficence; uſe and improve your faculties till they be indefatigable, and decline not the greateſt exertions when duty and humanity demand them of you.

If the capacity of ever advancing, and of ever attaining to greater excellence, be a fourth prerogative of man, then muſt everything be in oppoſition to his dignity that impedes the expanſion of that capacity, that checks him, that puts him back, or fatigues and diſpirits him in his ſtruggles for higher attainments. And with what numbers of people, my pious hearers, does this capacity remain nothing but capacity! How few unfold and bring their powers into action as much as they might and ought! Or, is that to ſtretch forwards, is that properly to evolve our capacity of progreſſively advancing in perfection, when we are ſo eaſily ſatisfied with what we know, what we can do, and what we perform; when we indeed prefer the good to the bad, but ſo ſeldom the better to the good; when we reckon ourſelves ſufficiently wiſe ſo ſoon as we in ſome ſort underſtand the buſineſs of our ſtation and calling, and have learnt to act our part with tolerable decency in ſocial life: when we imagine ourſelves virtuous and pious enough, ſo long as we keep from open tranſgreſſions, from heinous

vices, and flagrant enormities; when we forbear to laugh at religion, while we regularly frequent the public worſhip, and maintain the character of an honeſt irreproachable man; while we confine our beneficence merely to almſgiving, to the cuſtomary marks of courteſy and friendſhip, but are loth to ſacrifice anything, or abridge ourſelves in the ſlighteſt inſtance for others, from a generous and a beneficent ſpirit? Is that to be called ſtretching forward, is that to be called properly to unfold our capacity of a progreſſive perfection, and thereby maintaining the honour of the human ſpecies, when we are afraid of being wiſer and better than others, of ſhewing our ſuperiority by a ſounder judgment, nobler ſentiments, and a purer virtue; when we will not venture to leave the common, the beaten track, will not riſe above prevailing prejudices and cuſtoms, from a dread of being charged with affectation and ſingularity, and are contented to regulate and model ourſelves by others, and commonly by people of moderate talents and feeble hearts? Is that to be termed ſtretching forwards, is that to be called properly to expand our capacity of progreſſively tending to perfection, when we ſuffer every obſtacle we meet with on the path of perfection, every unſucceſsful attempt, every trip, any privation of outward things, any petulant ſneer of the fool, any inſipid jeſt of the ſoppling to deter us from the purſuit of our object, or make us forſake that path?

No,

No, would you likewiſe in this reſpect maintain the dignity of your nature, my dear friends, allow neither your own indolence nor the example of others, to have any arbitrary controul over you. Never think that you are wiſe and virtuous and pious enough, that you have already done good enough, and have rendered ſervice enough to the world; regard no height of knowledge, of wiſdom, of virtue and piety as abſolutely unattainable; and reckon what you already know, already poſſeſs, already can do, and already have done, as little in compariſon of what you ſtill may know and attempt and attain and perform. To be all and to do all that man is capable of doing and becoming, and to perform whatever depends on human ſtrength, be that the exalted, the glorious object of your ſtedfaſt endeavours; an object to which you will be ever approaching, but which you will never completely attain!

Then you are immortal, my dear friends, and this likewiſe gives you a dignity which eminently raiſes you above the whole inanimate and tranſitory creation. Oh, beware of everything that is at variance with this your dignity, or may tarniſh the luſtre of it! Thou art immortal, o man, thou ſhalt continue, thou ſhalt live, thou ſhalt be happy for ever; and doſt thou ſtill confine thy views to the preſent, doſt thou care only for the moments of this ſhort terreſtrial life, doſt thou with thy whole heart depend on what is tranſient and earthly, and

ſeek thy whole felicity in things which death will raviſh from thee, which are lent thee only for ſome few days or hours! Thou art immortal; thou ſhalt continue for ever, live for ever, be happy for ever; and doſt thou ſtill live ſo, as if thou wert altogether fleſh, altogether to ſee corruption; as if thou hadſt nothing to hope for, and nothing to fear beyond the grave; as if no judgment and no retribution, no reward and no puniſhment awaited thee; as though thy preſent conduct ſtood in no connection with thy future lot! Thou art immortal; thou ſhalt ſubſiſt for ever, live for ever, be happy for ever; and ſtill doſt thou ſo little in regard to the future! And ſtill doſt thou ſo ſeldom ſacrifice the deceitful pleaſures of the preſent moment to the abiding felicity of heaven! And yet doſt thou ſo frequently complain of that which educates and prepares thee for that ſuperior ſtate! And yet does every misfortune ſo eaſily overſet thee! And yet does every privation of earthly things as deeply affect thee as if thou hadſt no other and no greater ſatisfactions to expect! And ſtill doſt thou tremble at the approach of death, which is to put thee in poſſeſſion of ſuch great felicity! And ſtill doſt thou ſhudder and ſtart at the ſight of the yawning grave, as if thou and all thy comforts were there to be abſorbed and annihilated for ever! What inconſiſtency! What ſelf-degradation! Doſt thou thus think and act conformably with the dignity of a creature exalted far above the duſt, of an immortal being?

being? Are theſe the judgments, ſentiments, affections, concerns, ſatisfactions, cares, ſolicitudes, befitting a man who has ſuch proſpects before him, who has an everlaſting life in view?

No, wouldſt thou ſupport thy dignity, o man! never forget that thou art deſigned for immortality. This conſideration ſhould often occur to thee, whether in the tumult of ſociety, or in the ſilence of ſolitude; in the midſt of thy pleaſures, or in the midſt of thy buſineſs, ſhould call to thee in a piercing voice: let not thy heart be attached to things which thou muſt certainly loſe, which thou probably muſt leave ſo ſoon! Treat not with indifference things that have and will have ſuch great and everlaſting influence on all thy future fortunes! Confine not thy deſires, thy endeavours, thy hopes, to tranſient moments, when thou ſeeſt an eternity before thee! Neglect not for the affairs and diſtractions of this ſhort, uncertain life on earth, the far more weighty concerns of thy ſpirit, which ſhall live for ever! Let the proſpect into futurity be the rule of thy judgment on the preſent, and thy behaviour towards it. Bear and forbear, as one whom no ſorrows and ſufferings upon earth can entirely overwhelm, whom nothing can deprive of his high deſtination; give and loſe and ſacrifice, as one whoſe riches are inexhauſtible, whoſe happineſs is incorruptible! enjoy every pleaſure, every delight, as one who expects far purer pleaſure, far nobler joys! Conſtantly chuſe and do that which

thou wilt never repent, which will exhilarate thee for ever! So will the grandeur, the dignity, the majeſty, of an immortal being be reſplendent in thee, in all thy thoughts and in all thy deeds, in ſuffering and in enjoying, and give a value to thy life which nothing elſe can give it.

Wouldſt thou maintain thy dignity, o man! then ſixthly above all beware of whatever is in oppoſition to the cloſe and bleſſed relation in which thou ſtandeſt to God and his ſon Jeſus, of all that may diminiſh, obſcure, or deſtroy thy reſemblance to the deity, thy reſemblance to Chriſt. — Reverence thy mind, by which thou art not only allied to angels, but art of divine extraction; and beware of miſuſing it, for that is to miſuſe what is thy greateſt glory, what approximates thee moſt to deity. Beware of error and ſin; for error and ſin eſtrange thee from God, and make thee leſs capable of communion with him. Beware of every thing that is contrary to the mind of Jeſus, that illuſtrious pattern of human dignity, that perfect image of the Father. Beware of hindering, and, as far as in thee lies, of fruſtrating the benevolent deſigns of God on man, and the great work of his delegate on earth, by encouraging infidelity or ſuperſtition, by corrupt example, by baſe and iniquitous actions. Rather ſeek thy whole glory in willing as God wills, in being ſo minded as Jeſus was, in acting as thou ſeeſt God act, and in walking as Jeſus alſo walked. So will the ſpirit of God, the

ſpirit

ſpirit of his ſon Jeſus, be viſible in thee, and operate through thee. So wilt thou be in the hand of God to thy brethren, what that extraordinary teacher ſent from him formerly was, what heavenly meſſengers, and what the apoſtles of our lord were to them. So wilt thou render thyſelf continually more capable and worthy of being called, in the higheſt acceptation of the word, a ſon, a daughter of God; the honour of being a brother, a ſiſter, of Jeſus, the firſt-born of the Father; and what a luſtre will this diffuſe over all thou art and all thou doſt!

Laſtly, o man! is there dignity and grandeur in thy outward form; oh then beware of disfiguring and defacing it by any degrading ſentiments, any unſeemly grief and ſorrow, any violent inordinate paſſions. Let the beauty and the nobleneſs of thy mind animate and enhance the beauty of thy perſon. Let thine eyes ſpeak neither falſehood nor artifice, neither envy nor hatred; thy lips neither treachery nor lies; but both they and theſe, ſimple truth and ſimple love. Let thy look be friendly to mankind; let thy countenance be open; and all thy mien and geſture expreſs thy cultivated underſtanding, thy kind and generous heart! —

Art thou the foremoſt, the chief inhabitant of the earth; doſt thou preſide and govern there, o man, in the name of thy great ſuperior; and wouldſt thou maintain the dignity of God's vicegerent in this province of his domain, oh preſide and govern with

with gentleneſs and wiſdom. Be not the tyrant, be the guardian, the provider, the leader of all inferior creatures; drive them not from thee, but approach them with complacency, with compaſſion, with ſuccour. Slay and deſtroy them not without neceſſity; and when thou haſt need of them, when thou canſt not even ſpare their lives, at leaſt forbear to multiply their ſufferings and to augment their pains; torment them not, to prolong thy ſavage pleaſure, or to gratify thy faſtidious appetite. Do not deſolate and ravage the earth, which thou art deſigned to improve and to adorn. Spread not death and deſtruction, but life and joy around thee. Be principally the benefactor of thy brethren, of whatever nation, of whatever condition they may be. Deſpiſe none; injure none; let none feel thy power or thy pre-eminence, but as indications of thy beneficence and love; put not the ſhackles of bondage on any, for all have the ſame pretenſions to freedom as thou; diſturb no one in his innocent pleaſures; refuſe no one that help which thou art able to afford; obſtruct no one in his endeavours after perfection; and let the poſſeſſions, the wealth, the liberty, the privileges, the comforts of every one, be ſacred and inviolable to thee! — —

Art thou the prieſt of nature; and wouldſt thou maintain that dignity; oh be not indifferent, be not inſenſible to the wonders of almighty wiſdom and goodneſs which ſurround thee on all ſides. Hearken to the voice of nature, take up her ſong of praiſe;

participate

participate in the joy of every living thing, and let thy heart feel and thy tongue expreſs what inferior beings can neither expreſs nor feel, and offer up thankſgiving and praiſe, in the name of all, to him who made both thee and them, who has exalted thee ſo highly above them, and to whom alone all glory and praiſe are due for ever.

SERMON III.

How and by what Means Chriſtianity reſtores the Dignity of Man.

GOD, who loveſt and provideſt for us with fatherly kindneſs, unhappy indeed ſhould we be if we knew thee not, if we were not under thy inſpection, if we might not truſt in thy paternal providence and ſupport, if we were left to ourſelves, to our ignorance and our imbecility! How ſoon ſhould we then forfeit our dignity! how deeply degrade ourſelves by folly and ſin! in what a helpleſs and forlorn condition ſhould we be! But thou, who haſt created us, and haſt crowned us with glory and honour, thou provideſt alſo for our preſervation, and for the preſervation of the prerogatives which thou haſt graciouſly conferred upon us. What great things haſt thou not done for us in this reſpect, particularly for us who have the happineſs to be chriſtians! What light ſurrounds us! What a glorious courſe is aſſigned us! What proſpects are opened before us! What new incitements and energies haſt

haſt thou not granted us to the maintenance of our dignity! What can we not now be and do and become, ſince we know thee as our God and father, underſtand thy gracious diſpoſitions towards us, ſtand under thy inſpection, feel thy intimate preſence, are aſſured of thy aſſiſtance and ſupport, are authentically certified of a better, an everlaſting life, and are brought ſo nigh to thee through thy ſon Jeſus! Of what virtue, of what bliſs are we now not capable! Yes, thanks, everlaſting thanks be therefore rendered unto thee, Allgracious and Allmerciful, for having called us to chriſtianity, and thereby raiſed us from the abyſs of weakneſs and miſery to this height of intellectual vigour and felicity! Oh may we ever become worthier of our privileges, may the dignity of man be more and more reſplendent in us! Oh let us never forget, how much thou haſt done in us, of how great things thou haſt made us capable, never be ſo ungrateful to thee, never ſo inimical and unjuſt to ourſelves as to ſtop ſhort at the lower degrees of wiſdom and of virtue, with the moſt powerful means and incitements to ſuperior excellence! No, let our ſouls be inflamed by a noble ambition, let the ſenſe of our dignity, reſtored through Chriſt, be ever becoming more lively, conſtantly more fruitful in good ſentiments and actions, in us and by us! Bleſs the meditations that are intended now to incite and encourage us to that end, and hearken to our prayer through Jeſus Chriſt; in whoſe name we humbly offer

offer up our requeſts at the footſtool of thy mercy-ſeat and conclude them in the words which he inſtructed us to uſe when we pray unto thee: Our father, &c.

PSALM viii. 6.

Thou haſt made him a little lower than the angels, and haſt crowned him with glory and honour.

CERTAIN as it is, my devout audience, that man poſſeſſes a great inherent dignity, and that the attentive obſerver cannot fail of perceiving it: yet it is no leſs certain, that error and vice, ſuperſtition and ſervility, have greatly obſcured its luſtre; and that there have been times when the prerogatives and the nobility of man, when his alliance with God, and his deſtination to a higher perfection, were ſcarcely diſcernible. Into what a ſtate of weakneſs, of debility, of the moſt ignominious proſtration, were many nations formerly, and are ſtill immerſed! And how much deeper yet would mankind have fallen from that dignity, if God had left them to themſelves; if he had put no check to their progreſſively increaſing corruption and miſery! But how much has not God done in this reſpect in behalf of mankind, in every age and in every nation! How often has he raiſed up among them, ſouls of more refined and generous ſentiments, minds of deeper penetration, of more eminent abilities

lities and more extenſive operation; who have been ſhining lights in their generation, for inſpiring multitudes that were in a dying ſtate with new life, freſh activity in good, and for reaching out a hand to ſenſual men, in order to raiſe them above their ſenſuality, and bring them nearer to their high appointment! How much has not God in particular done by his ſon Jeſus, for the reſtoration of the human dignity! Was not this the ultimate tendency of the whole of his great work on earth? How greatly has God honoured and exalted man by a cloſe affinity and connection with his ſon, the firſt-born of every creature! And what noble ſentiments does chriſtianity infuſe into its genuine profeſſors! how greatly does it extend their horizon, and their field of action! of what great achievements it renders them capable, and how it aggrandiſes all that they think and do! Certainly, a chriſtian, who is ſo in deed and in truth, is he of all men in whom the dignity of man is manifeſted in its brighteſt luſtre, in its moſt various and honourable effects! Oh, my pious hearers, could I but cite you all, who nevertheleſs bear the name of chriſtians, as a proof of it; how ſuperfluous then were every other demonſtration of this truth! Grateful joy in our recovered dignity, and mutual encouragement to preſerve it, would then be our ſole employment. But we muſt now proceed to ſet the truth of what we affirm concerning the preeminent dignity of the chriſtian, in its proper point

of view, by other arguments, drawn from the nature of the caſe itſelf. And this, my pious hearers, ſhall be the purport and ſcope of my preſent diſcourſe. I will endeavour to anſwer the queſtion: How and by what means has chriſtianity rekindled in man the ſentiment of his dignity, ſtrengthened and eaſed him in the maintenance of it.

Chriſtianity places our relation to God in the cleareſt light; it teaches us how great an intereſt the divine being takes in the deſtinies of man, and how much he has done and ſtill does for him; it informs us of the providence and the government of God, of his conſtant preſence everywhere, his ſovereign inſpection over all, his influence upon all, and promiſes us his particular aſſiſtance as often as we ſtand in need of it; it ſets conſpicuouſly before us the dignity of man in the perſon of Jeſus, in his conduct, in his attendant circumſtances; and thereby points out to us what the human nature is capable of; and to what degree of perfection it is able to arrive; it announces to us immortality, everlaſting life, a never-ending, an always increaſing felicity; it advertiſes us of the ſtrict connection of our preſent with our future ſtate: and by all theſe means chriſtianity promotes the ſentiment and the reſtoration of the human dignity.

Firſt, I ſay, chriſtianity places our relation to God in the cleareſt light; thus cauſing man to feel his dignity, and alleviating to him the maintenance of it. Is man to imagine himſelf the work of blind chance,

chance, or a ſon of the earth in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word; may he boaſt of no other origin than that of the plants; is he ſprung, as has been affirmed of ſome inſects, from foulneſs and corruption? Could he not elevate his mind to the apprehenſion and belief of a ſovereign deity; or were not this deity known to him as the creator of the world, as the father of mankind: of how little value would his exiſtence and his nature be in his own ſight! What is more vile and pitiable than the ſlave of chance, which deſtroys to-morrow what it produced to-day, which never acts by deſign and rule, and is perpetually at variance with itſelf! What is more worthleſs and precarious, than the exiſtence of a lump of clay in this or the other form; which, being nothing but clay, muſt ſooner or later be wholly decompoſed, and fall forever into duſt! And were not theſe the degrading conceptions formed by numbers of the wiſe and the unwiſe among the heathens, concerning man and his origin? — — How totally different is the information which chriſtianity gives us on this head! It proclaims aloud to each of its profeſſors: God, the Selfſubſiſtent, the Eternal, the Abſolutely Perfect, is thy creator and father, as well as the creator of all worlds, of all the hoſts of heaven, and of all the inhabitants of the earth! Neither chance nor fate: no, conſummate wiſdom and goodneſs called thee into being, gave thee life and breath and all things. Thou art no earthborn

creature: thou art the ſon, the daughter of God, of the Moſt High: thou art of divine deſcent, formed after the image of God, capable of communion, and of an ever greater aſſimilation with him! Thou art not altogether duſt, only thy preſent tabernacle is terrene; the ſpirit that inhabits it is far ſuperior to duſt; is ordained to important, to grand deſigns; and depends not more on chance for its duration than its production, but upon the will of him who loves thee as a father, and aſſuredly will not deſtroy the work of his hands! And the God who has formed thee is likewiſe thy preſerver, thy ſovereign, thy overſeer, thy judge, and hereafter will be thy rewarder! Does man then ſtand in ſuch relative ſituations to God; is he ſo intimately connected with the ſupremely perfect mind, with the creator and governor of the world; is he his child, his peculiarly beloved and favoured child, what a value ſhould this give him in his own eyes! how far exalt his nature above all inferior ſpecies of creatures! What a ſentiment of his dignity muſt it excite in his breaſt! How could he boaſt of being born from above, and of his alliance with God, were he to degrade himſelf by unworthy ſentiments and actions? How could he aſſert the honour of being created in the image of God, were he not adorned with wiſdom and virtue? How recollect his connection with God, the pure eternal fount of light, and yet walk in darkneſs?

Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity teaches us farther, how great an intereſt God takes in the concerns of man, and how much he has done and ſtill does for him; and what a grand idea ſhould this give us of our dignity! how forcibly ſhould it urge us to the maintenance of it! According to the doctrine of chriſtianity, we are not the work of a deity who takes no care of his creatures, but leaves them to themſelves; not the offspring of a father who diſowns his children, who gives himſelf no concern about them, but is indifferent to their happineſs and their miſery. No, never has God, according to that comfortable doctrine, left himſelf unwitneſſed to mankind; never withdrawn from them his fatherly providence and love; never abandoned the fortunes of his feeble, helpleſs, untutored children, to blind chance, or to their own frowardneſs. No, from their firſt progenitor, to his lateſt poſterity, has he, he himſelf, provided for their ſupport, their inſtruction, their correction, their education, their progreſs to ſuperior perfection. He has conſtantly revealed himſelf to them in various ways; conſtantly ſhowered innumerable benefits on them; ſometimes lovingly correcting, and ſometimes bountifully bleſſing them; has conſtantly been nigh to them, and has left them in want of no means for becoming wiſer and better. When has he ever withheld his fructifying influence from nature, when denied his ſupernal energies to the human mind, when withdrawn from it the

incitements, the ſtrongeſt incitements to its developement and proficiency? When has ſuch darkneſs covered the earth, or even any region of it, that not one ray of light has broken in upon and cleared? When did ſuch univerſal corruption prevail upon it that nothing happened to check or to controul it? How often has he ſent wiſe and good men as his meſſengers to their brethren! How frequently has his providence, by various ways, united brighter regions with thoſe that lay in darkneſs, mixed enlightened perſons among the raw uncivilized ſons of nature, and the beſt with the worſt of men! How full of wiſdom and goodneſs were his dealings with the poſterity of Jacob, the education he gave them, and through them to ſo many other nations! And how much, how inexpreſſibly much, has he not done at length for man by his ſon Jeſus! What a teacher of truth, what a ſafe and ſure guide on the road of virtue and happineſs, what a mighty helper and deliverer; what an affectionate lord and king has he not given them in him! What revelations of his will, what aſſurances and proofs of his condeſcenſion and love, what promiſes and views in futurity, what comfort, what new energies has he not ſent down to them from heaven by this his repreſentative! — And ſhall man, for whom God cares and provides ſo much; ſhall man, for whom he has done and ſtill does ſo great things; ſhall man, for whoſe ſake he ſpared not even his ſon, the only begotten, for whom

whom he gave his ſon, the beloved, to ſuffer death: ſhall this man be a contemptible, an inſignificant creature? not be of great worth; not have a pre-eminent dignity; not apprehend this dignity; not be happy in the ſentiment of it whenever he recollects how much he is eſteemed of God, how graciouſly he is diſpoſed towards him, and with what paternal tenderneſs he cares for him? No, cauſe and effect, means and end, are in the cloſeſt connection with the Allwiſe; and that on which he vouchſafes ſuch peculiar inſpection and providence muſt certainly be, either in itſelf and its nature, or in its deſtination, grand and important.

Yet more, my pious hearers; chriſtianity places thirdly the doctrine of the divine providence and government in the cleareſt light; it proclaims to us the conſtant preſence of God with all, his ſupreme inſpection over all, his influence in all, and promiſes us his particular aſſiſtance as often as we have occaſion for it. And how much muſt this too occaſion man to feel his dignity! how forcibly ſhould it urge him to the maintenance of it! By this doctrine, all that a man does and all that befalls him, everything that happens in the world, wears another aſpect, and aſſumes a greater importance than it otherwiſe would and could poſſeſs. Theſe doctrines diffuſe the cleareſt light over every thing that otherwiſe would be myſterious in the ſtate and fortunes of man, or muſt lower him in his own eyes. To be left to himſelf, without the

wiſe ſuperintendance of one ſupreme diſpoſing power, without the conduct and guidance of an almighty and beneficent father; placed upon ſo changeable and ſo perplexed a ſcene: ſubject to ſo many dangers; expoſed to all the ficklenefs of chance, the attacks of artifice and iniquity; without refuge in adverſity, without aſſiſtance in perils; how weak, how miſerable, how contemptible, would man appear to himſelf! How often would he be tempted to envy the condition of the beaſts of the field! But now, enlightened by the bright beams of chriſtianity, how muſt his ſpirit be elated! With what ſerenity, what courage, what confidence, ſhould he now be inſpired! What deſign, what conſiſtency, what order, now appear where all before ſeemed confuſion, inconſiſtency, and open ſtrife! The chriſtian may now hold this language to himſelf: God, the Omnifcient, the Allbountiful, who governs all my deſtinies, the deſtinies of all mankind and of all worlds: he comprehends all, overſees all, directs and diſpoſes all, the ſmall as well as the great, the evil as well as the good; in his hand are all animate and inanimate creatures, all cauſes and efficacies, and without his will not an atom can change its place, not a hair fall off from my head, no man do me harm, no loſs, no misfortune attend me; and all that he wills and ordains, is right and good, is conſtantly the beſt. He ſees in the cleareſt light, where profound darkneſs encompaſſes me; he provides for me where I

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can find nothing to procure; and makes that to be the means to my perfection and happineſs, which I thought calamity and diſtreſs. He, the Almighty, the Allbountiful, is conſtantly nigh to me with his help, is acquainted with all my wants, hears all my ſighs, manifeſts his ſtrength in my weakneſs, guides and conducts me by his ſpirit, executes his decrees on earth by me, and is ever ready to do more in us and by us than we are able to aſk or to conceive. He, the Omniſcient, the Omnipreſent, is everywhere with me and about me. He knows my heart, is the infallible witneſs of all I think and do, he ſees in ſecret, and will reward that openly which was done in private. His judgment is pure righteouſneſs and truth, his approbation is ever conſtant to the ſincere, and his approbation is of infinitely more value than all the applauſe of the world, than all the poſſeſſions and all the glories of the earth. — And man, my dear friends, who believes ſuch a providence, who thus walks under the inſpection of God, who thus acts in his preſence, who may eſteem himſelf an inſtrument in the hand of the Almighty, a means to the attainment of his deſigns: how grand ſhould his deſtination, how important ſhould the work he is commiſſioned to tranſact on earth appear to him! How ſtrong muſt he feel himſelf in the aſſurance of divine ſupport! What good actions will he not find power and reſolution in himſelf to perform under the eyes of his father and judge! How

generouſly, how greatly will he think and act even in the abſence of all human witneſſes, when deſtitute of all human approbation, and even amidſt the ingratitude of the world! How undaunted, with what compoſure will he behold the revolutions and ſubverſions that may happen in the world and among mankind; how tranquil and confident will he lift up his eyes on high in reverence to God, as the kind and wiſe ruler and father of him and the whole creation!

Chriſtianity diſplays clearly to us, in the fourth place, the dignity of humanity in the perſon of Jeſus, its reſtorer and chief, in his conduct and in his deſtinies; thereby teaching us in a no leſs comprehenſible than incontrovertible manner, what the human nature is capable of, and to what height of perfection it is able to aſcend. Yes, my dear friends, in Jeſus, who is our relative, our brother, whoſe life is ſo indiſſolubly connected with our lives, whoſe fortunes are ſo inſeparably combined with ours, in him our dignity appears in all its purity, in its perfect ſplendour. What wiſdom, what virtue, what probity were poſſeſſed by him! What love to God and man pervaded him! What did he not perform; and how pure, how beneficent were his views in all that he did! What did he not endure; and with what readineſs, how ſtedfaſtly, how piouſly, did he endure it all! What condeſcenſions, what ſacrifices, what unbroken obedience to his heavenly father, what indefatigable

defatigable zeal in beneficence, what unabated purſuit of his object marked the whole tenour of his life on earth! What temptation could conquer him, what wrongs exaſperate him, what dangers alarm him, what difficulty diſcourage him, or what ſufferings make him impatient! And to what a ſummit of power, of honour, of glory, by all this has he not aſcended! How great, how immenſely great, is now his ſphere of action! how illuſtrious is humanity now exalted to the right hand of the father! how reaſonable now, and how reaſonable hereafter, that every knee ſhould bow to him our chief, and every tongue confeſs that he is lord, to the glory of God the Father! Recognize here, o man, the dignity of thy nature! Here feel what thou, as man, mayeſt do, what thou mayeſt endure, what thou mayeſt withſtand; to what a height thou haſt power and capacity to raiſe thyſelf, as man! Feel the whole value of the privilege whereby God has honoured man, in the perſon of his reſtorer and chief! That Jeſus, who is now exalted far above all, who ſo widely rules and acts, is fleſh of thy fleſh, is thy brother, was a man like thee, was tempted as thou art, was acquainted with grief like thee, and entered into glory through obedience and ſufferings! What exerciſes and trials can now affright thee, what conflicts diſmay thee, what ſacrifice coſt thee too much, what difficulties arreſt thee in thy courſe, what ſummit of wiſdom and virtue, what degree of felicity, can now ſeem unattainable

attainable to thee! Look unto him, thy leader and chief, tread in his footſteps, exert thyſelf, emulate him; through him thou mayeſt do all things, with him riſe ſuperior to all, with him prevail and triumph, and hereafter behold and enjoy the glory which the Father has beſtowed on him, and in him on all mankind who vindicate the dignity of their nature!

Laſtly, chriſtianity has revived in man the ſentiment of his dignity, and given him the moſt powerful incitements to maintain it, by the grand doctrine of immortality and everlaſting life, which it places in the moſt conſpicuous light, and has connected in the cloſeſt manner with what we are and do, and all that happens to us. Though man poſſeſſed ever ſo great privileges over the beaſts of the field; though he felt in himſelf ever ſo great powers and faculties for the nobleſt undertakings; though he could bring ever ſo much to paſs, and execute ſo much good; how little would all this appear to him, if theſe privileges, theſe powers, theſe capacities, this generous activity, were to be loſt to him in a few extremely uncertain, quickly-fleeting years, if he were to be deprived of them for ever by death; had he no fruit to expect from all he has here learnt and done and ſuffered and ſacrificed and practiſed! How little nouriſhment for his nobler ſentiments, how little incitement to great and generous actions, to difficult but beneficial undertakings, what poor encouragement to the unremitted

mitted purſuit of higher perfection, would man find in his preſent ſituation, if death were the period of his exiſtence, if the grave and corruption were the term of all his hopes and exertions! How fooliſh would the generality of his ſacrifices to integrity and virtue appear! and how wiſe the ſaying of the fool: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die! — — But now, enlightened by the bright beams of the goſpel, animated by the hope of a bleſſed immortality, how totally different is the caſe with man! What a ſentiment of his dignity, of his grandeur, of his future exaltation, muſt it awaken in him, when he can ſay to himſelf, I live, I think, I labour, I endure, I ſuffer, I am training myſelf for eternity! My preſent ſtate is only an apprenticeſhip to the future: my future ſtate, the continuation and reward of the preſent! Whatever I do here draws conſequences, unterminating conſequences after it. The honourable and generous actions that I now perform will ſtill rejoice and bleſs me, after thouſands and millions of years. The light which I here ſpread around me will enlighten me and my brethren beyond the grave; the good of every kind, I here effect in others and by their means, will proceed in operation from everlaſting to everlaſting, and be ever producing more good in infinite progreſſion; and all that here befalls me has an influence on my future deſtination for ever. What now oppreſſes me, and what the world calls misfortune and diſtreſs, may be to me the inexhauſt-

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ible ſource of pleaſure and bliſs in future. The violence I now do to myſelf, the hardſhips, the trouble I now endure for the love of God and of my fellow-creatures, work together for my everlaſting good. What can I voluntarily ſurrender for the ſake of God and my conſcience, which I ſhall not receive an hundred fold; what give to my brethren, from a truly chriſtian heart, that I ſhall not hereafter receive again with uſury; what ſacrifice to my duty, that will not be amply repaid? Nay, the more I here beſtow, the more ſhall I there receive, and the more I ſhall have to beſtow again. The farther I here proceed in knowledge, in wiſdom and in virtue, the faſter there ſhall I advance from one degree of perfection and happineſs to another; the nearer ſhall I approach to Jeſus my chieftain and lord, and, through him, to deity ſupreme. Here I learn to be and to do and to enjoy, what in that ſuperior life I ſhall more perfectly be and do and enjoy. Here is the time for ſowing, for planting, for working, for conflicting; there the time of harveſt, of enjoyment, of repoſe, of triumph! No, my exiſtence is not confined to this fleeting moment: it will continue for ever! My activity is not bounded by the narrow ſmall circle in which I now live and move: it will be ever enlarging, ever becoming more extenſive and diverſified. My intellectual powers are not ſubject to diſſolution and decay like duſt: they ſhall continue in operation and effect for ever; and the more I exert them here, the better

better I employ them, the more I effect by them, ſo much better ſhall I uſe them in the future world, ſo much the more ſhall I there effectuate by them. I ſee before me an inceſſant enlargement of my ſphere of ſight and action, an inceſſant increaſe in knowledge, in virtue, in operation, in felicity. The whole immenſity of God's creation, the whole unnumbered hoſt of intelligent, thinking beings, all the hidden treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge in Jeſus Chriſt, the unfathomable depths of divine perfection: what noble employments, what diſplays of my powers, what pure delights, what everlaſting progreſs, do theſe hold out to my expectations! And, with ſuch proſpects, with ſuch expectations, muſt I not feel myſelf great, not feel myſelf happy? can I fail of ſeeing my relationſhip with ſuperior beings, my fellowſhip with Chriſt, my communion with God? With ſuch proſpects, with ſuch expectations, ſhall I degrade myſelf by folly and ſin, by folly and ſin forego my ſublime deſtination! With ſuch proſpects, with ſuch expectations, ſhall I ever be diſcouraged and relaxed in doing acts of juſtice and mercy, ſhall I ever loſe ſight of the glorious prize that ſhines before me, or ſhun any honourable exertion of my faculties, complain of any ſacrifice that I offer to God and my conſcience, let any opportunity eſcape me of ſowing good ſeed, and of increaſing the abundance of my future harveſt! With ſuch proſpects, with ſuch expectations, ſhall I be terrified at any misfortune, or tremble at the ſight of death and the grave! Can then miſ-

fortune, or death, or the grave, deſtroy me? Are misfortune and death and the grave anything but the means and the way to a ſuperior life and greater felicity! No, welcome to me be every exerciſe of my powers, every opportunity of doing good; let every misfortune, that makes me wiſer and better, be bleſſed of me, and the ſummons of death be a ſummons to paſs into the better life. — Oh, my dear friends, if we think ſo, — and ſo we may and ſo we ought to think as chriſtians, — how luminous, how momentous to us muſt all become! What a value muſt all that we are, and all that we do, and all that happens to us, receive from hence! How alert, how effective in us, muſt the ſenſe of our dignity be!

Yes, wouldſt thou apprehend and aſſert thy dignity, art thou ambitious to have it ſeen in all its luſtre, o man; be a chriſtian, be wholly chriſtian, be wholly animated by the temper and ſpirit of chriſtianity, believe its doctrines with thy whole heart, follow its precepts with fidelity and fortitude, firmly rely on its promiſes, model thyſelf entirely on its founder, Jeſus! The ſpirit of chriſtianity will free thy ſoul from every ſordid ſentiment, every corrupt affection; will elevate thy mind, enlarge thy heart, give thee a conſcious ſenſe of thy faculties, and ever communicate new powers to the ſoul; it will raiſe thee above all that is viſible and earthly, will conſtantly give thee a nearer and brighter reſemblance to Jeſus, the pattern of all human perfection, and advance thee ever nearer to deity. Vivified by the

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ſpirit of chriſtianity, thou wilt juſtly eſteem the capacities, the endowments, the abilities that God has beſtowed upon thee, carefully evolve and exert them, and conſtantly produce as much good by them as at any time thou canſt. Animated by the ſpirit of chriſtianity, thou wilt never act like a ſlave; never ſubmit to be governed by any ſenſual appetite, by any unruly paſſion; thou wilt not cringe with ſervility to any mortal; thou wilt conſtantly think and act with eaſe and magnanimity. Animated by the ſpirit of chriſtianity, thou wilt ever be more active, more indefatigable in goodneſs, wilt never be weary in ſtriving upwards and contending for the prize that awaits the conqueror. Animated by the ſpirit of chriſtianity, thou wilt already in this mortality think and act like an immortal; and wilt perform a thouſand acts of goodneſs, and enjoy a thouſand comforts, which he can neither perform nor enjoy who is unmindful of his immortality, or cannot exult in it. O tranſcendent, holy, divine ſpirit of chriſtianity, ſpirit of wiſdom and power, of love and felicity, may thy all-animating breath quicken, warm, pervade our hearts! Rouze us to a noble conſcience of ourſelves, inſpire us with a godlike energy, with the moſt active zeal in goodneſs, penetrate and inſpire us with love to God and man! How great, how illuſtrious will then our dignity be, and how much greater and more illuſtrious will it become, from one period of our lives to another, and from eternity to eternity!

SERMON IV.

The Value of Human Life.

GOD, creator and father of our life, how can we be ſufficiently grateful to thee, for having cauſed us to be, who formerly were not, and called us into life! How ſufficiently thank thee for having made us capable of a life with conſcioufneſs, of a rational, wiſe, and virtuous life, leading to ever higher perfection and happineſs! And with how many bounties, with how many gratifications, pleaſures and joys, has thy loving kindneſs ſtrewn our path! What evident traces of thy fatherly providence and love meet we not everywhere on it! Yes, o eternal fount of being and enjoyment, to whom thou giveſt life, thou giveſt alſo capacities and means of pleaſure and delight! Whom thou raiſeſt to the life of a rational creature, to him thou openeſt, in the knowledge of truth, in the practice of virtue, in communion with thee, in the hope of immortality, ſources of pleaſure and delight, that never fail, from which he may draw eternal

eternal joy and felicity. Happy we, that we are, that we live, that we live as men, as chriſtians, as creatures endowed with reaſon and called to immortality, and may be ſo elate of mind in our life, in thee and in the enjoyment of thy bounties! Oh let us rightly underſtand and feel the value of our life, and teach us to uſe and enjoy it agreeably to thy gracious, thy benevolent deſigns. Keep us from embittering it by folly and vice, by violent, malignant paſſions, and miſapplying a gift which thou haſt beſtowed as a bleſſing, to our own perdition. Let wiſdom and virtue and piety be our guides and handmaids on the journey of life, and let us all, under their direction, attain to that perfection and happineſs to which thou haſt appointed us in this and in the future world. Bleſs to that end the meditations that are now to employ our thoughts. Let them diffuſe a clear light upon the nature and deſtination of our preſent life, and let that light correct our judgments on it, and regulate the whole of our future conduct. Profeſſing ourſelves the diſciples of thy ſon Jeſus, and entirely truſting in his promiſes, we conclude our petitions in the words which he himſelf did teach us: Our father, &c.

PSALM CXIX. 175.

Let my ſoul live, and it ſhall praiſe thee.

THE deſire to live is natural to all men, my pious hearers. Neither grief, nor pain, nor misfortunes, can totally ſuppreſs it; and the generality of mankind would rather recommence their courſe on earth, however gloomy, however troubleſome, however perilous it may have been, and expoſe themſelves again to all its difficulties and dangers, than have them ended by the loſs of life. Seldom is the burden of miſery ſo heavy, and the ſentiment of fatigue ſo oppreſſive; ſeldom do paſſion and error blind a man ſo far as to make him prefer death to life, and nonentity to exiſtence. Very rarely do we find any one ſo pious and ſo holy as to be able to ſay from his heart, with the apoſtle, "I have a deſire to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt, which is far better." Let us admire and adore the wiſe goodneſs of our creator, for having given us ſo innate an attachment to life, ſo implicated and blended it with our nature, and thereby furniſhed us with ſuch a powerful, ſuch an irreſiſtible impulſe to preſerve it! But let us dignify this deſire to live, by inveſtigating the principle of it, that we may be able to juſtify it at the bar of ſound reaſon. To love and to wiſh for life, without knowing why or wherefore, is blind animal inſtinct; but

but to love it on true and ſolid principles, and to wiſh for it in the beſt deſigns, will be no diſcredit to the philoſopher and the chriſtian. Thus the pſalmiſt is deſirous of it in our text. Let my ſoul live, ſays he to the Almighty, let my ſoul live, and it ſhall praiſe thee. Would we do ſo likewiſe, my pious hearers, would we ſo wiſh for life, that we might truly rejoice in it, and praiſe God for it, we muſt underſtand the real value of human life. We muſt neither eſteem it as better or as worſe, neither as more important nor more inſignificant, neither as more happy nor more unhappy, than it actually is. In one caſe our attachment to it would be too ſtrong, in the other not ſtrong enough. In both caſes we ſhould more or leſs miſtake its porper end and ſeldom make ſo good a uſe of it as we might.

Well then, my pious hearers, let us turn our reflections to-day on the value of human life, that we may diſcover why and to what purpoſe, we ſhould wiſh to live. For examining this matter properly, we ſhould do two things. Firſt ſhew, what is preſuppoſed in order to render human life of value, and indeed of great value to us; and then what gives it this value, or what makes it deſirable and eſtimable to us.

In order that our life ſhould be of real value to us, and that we may rightly appretiate that value, we muſt ſtudy it, we muſt ſeriouſly reflect upon it, we muſt conſider it on every ſide, and in its whole

compaſs; we muſt regard it, not under any falſe appearance which preſent, tranſitory, agreeable or diſagreeable ſenſations, any fortunate or unfortunate accidents may communicate to it. We muſt therefore bring into the account its joys as well as its ſorrows, its ſatisfactions as well as its troubles, the days of gratification and pleaſure, as well as the hours of pain and grief, the good we enjoy or may enjoy, as well as the evil that befalls us. We ſhould conſider it, not as the whole of our exiſtence, not as the entire capacity and meaſure of our felicity; but only as the beginning, as the lowermoſt ſtep of our rational exiſtence, as the prelude to a greater and higher felicity: and in ſo doing not ſuffer ourſelves to be guided by prevailing prejudices, but by juſt experiences, obſervations and principles. Whoever, deceived by certain figures of ſpeech, repreſents this earth to himſelf as a joyleſs deſert, as a vale of tears and ſorrow, as the abode of darkneſs and miſery; whoever, in oppoſition to univerſal experience, imagines that its evils preponderate over its ſatisfactions; whoever, from miſanthropy or ill-humour, at one time thinks that all mankind are fools, and at another knaves; not conſidering their origin and their appointment, degrades them into brutes, or looks upon man only as a comedian that has a part to perform, without any farther conſequence or view; and when this part is played, falls back to his primitive nothing; he who confines all his proſpects and hopes to the preſent momentary ſtate: to him indeed this life can

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have no great value, to him it muſt be a contemptible object, the preſervation of it of no importance, and the loſs of it not to be lamented. But is this a true picture of human life? Has then this earth, which God has adorned with ſuch numberleſs beauties and pleaſures, has it the appearance of a deſert? Is weeping and wailing ſo frequent or ſo loud upon it, that the voice of joy and gladneſs is nowhere to be heard? Does not man paſs far more hours in health than in ſickneſs; does he not experience far more bright than cloudy days? In the total amount, does not the ſum of his agreeable ſenſations very far exceed the ſum of his uneaſy and painful feelings? Amongſt the fools, are there not likewiſe many intelligent men; and amongſt the wicked many good? Is not, upon the whole, much more good than evil practiſed by them? And how can the philoſopher, the chriſtian, miſtake the dignity, the nobleneſs, the true end of man, I mean his reaſon, his capacity of conſtantly becoming more perfect, his immortality, and the connection between what he now is and does, and what he is to be and to do hereafter; and if he does not miſapprehend them, what a value muſt this give to his preſent life!

Farther, that this life may be of real, of great value to us, and that we may perceive and feel that value; we muſt actually employ it, and employ it in the beſt and the moſt rational manner. We muſt live with conſciouſneſs, with conſideration, upon eſtabliſhed principles and to ſettled purpoſes. We muſt be as

active as poſſible, and be active in the beſt and the moſt generally uſeful manner. To live, to live as men, does not imply ſimply to exiſt, not barely to have abilities, but to exert and apply theſe abilities, to act inwardly and outwardly in receiving and communicating happineſs, and to be conſcious of it. He who leads merely a vegetative or an animal life; he who ſleeps, dreams, trifles, or ſports his life away; who lives for the day, without reflection, without conſideration; who gives himſelf up to indolence and ſloth, or is induſtrious without deſign; exerts his powers without any particular aim; is always buſy, and yet does nothing with all his buſtle, always ſeeking happineſs, but never finding it; to him indeed this life muſt be a poor inſignificant affair. And how numerous is this laſt claſs of men, the claſs of buſy idlers, in the world! men that ſeem to be for ever employed, and yet in fact do nothing, bring nothing to effect; nothing of any importance to themſelves or to others; nothing that can procure them any laſting ſatisfaction and joy. Exempt from any ſettl d employment, from the duties of any particular buſineſs, they undertake now one thing and then another, and are ſoon weary of both; they run from object to object as the ſcene changes before them, and are delivered over from paſſion to paſſion according to the events that vary their lives; they paſs from one company to another, from one diverſion to another, continually entertaining great expectations from them, and as often deceived

deceived in their expectations, obtain nothing from theſe companies, and acquire no ſoothing reflections from the enjoyment of thoſe diverſions; can give no account to themſelves of this application of their time, and of the uſe of their abilities; and, as often as the ſentiment, as often as the clear conſciouſneſs of their condition ariſes within them, ſo often feel the emptineſs of their hearts, the wearieſome monotony, the diſſatisfaction, the vanity of their pleaſures; are diſguſted with life and its joys, and then exclaim, not from wiſdom, but from the involuntary ſentiment of their folly, in the words of the royal philoſopher: All, all is vanity! What great value can there be in life to ſuch men as theſe! How much more natural is it that it ſhould be a burden, a martyrdom to them! How many have hence been induced to lay it down as a load they were no longer able to bear! No, to him alone has it any real value who underſtands and conſtantly purſues the true ends of life; who has a determinate occupation; who exerts his powers with conſciouſneſs, upon ſolid principles, and does good with them; who can give himſelf a ſatisfactory account of what he does and accompliſhes with them; who every ſtep as it were, every day approaches nearer to perfection; who, as a reaſonable creature, as a chriſtian looks not ſolely at the preſent, but is continually carrying his views forward to the future; lives not entirely for this preſent moment of time, but for the unending ages of eternity. The other,

the unwiſe, the fool, the buſy idler, wanders about in error, and muſt neceſſarily at length be weary of his wanderings: while this, the truly wiſe man, the chriſtian, has a definite object in view, worthy of his purſuit; never entirely loſes ſight of it, and the nearer he approaches it, the brighter it ſhines before him.

Laſtly, that this life may be of great and real value to us, and if we would know and be ſenſible of its worth, we muſt effectually enjoy, and enjoy with conſciouſneſs, the various goods and ſatisfactions it affords. We muſt be at leaſt as ſenſible and ſuſceptible of the good and agreeable, as of the bad and diſagreeable which it contains. If we paſs through the world as though our ſenſes were locked up, or with unfeeling and obdurate hearts; a thouſand beauties that ſurround us will be unobſerved, a thouſand ſources of pleaſure that invite us to enjoyment will be left unexplored; or if we had rather ſcrutinize for defects than look out for perfections: then indeed muſt this life appear to us under a dark and mournful aſpect, and have but little value for us. But does anything loſe of its intrinſic value, merely becauſe we neither uſe nor obſerve its advantages? No, we muſt open our hearts and our ſenſes to the agreeable impreſſions which the advantages, the pleaſures, the joys of life are adapted to make upon us; we muſt ſee and feel and uſe and enjoy the beauties, the bleſſings, that preſent themſelves to us in ſuch diverſified forms, and invite us

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to uſe them in ſuch various ways; we muſt not trample, with haughty diſdain, on the flowers we meet with on the path of life; we muſt not ungratefully reject the recreations and comforts of which our heavenly father has not ſuffered even the ruggedeſt way to be totally deſtitute, and never turn our eyes from thoſe glorious proſpects which border on our courſe. Thus alone ſhall we properly eſtimate the value of life, and learn to deem it of high importance, and worthy of our eſteem.

And what gives it now this great value? What makes this life ſo eſtimable and deſirable? In this life we may learn much truth and goodneſs; attempt and execute many beneficial undertakings; enjoy many bleſſings; and qualify ourſelves for doing and enjoying ſtill better and greater things in the future world. Four particulars which muſt confer a great value on this life, imperfect as it is, in the eyes of all reflecting perſons.

Our life is therefore of great value, it is covetable, firſt, as in it we may learn ſo much truth and goodneſs, and may ſo much advance our ſpiritual perfection. All that ſurrounds us, all the events that befall us, wants and defects, buſineſs and pleaſures, joys and ſorrows, all conſpire to this final purpoſe; all is either occaſion, means, or motive to the exertion, the expanſion, the exerciſe, the perfection of our mental faculties; all teach us to think, to conſider, to inveſtigate; all is deſigned and calculated to make us rational of ſenſual creatures, of relations

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to the brutes to make us the kindred of angels. And how many ideas, how much general knowledge, how many perceptions of every kind, may we collect in this life by experience, by obſervation, by reflection, by inſtruction and by converſation! How the ſphere of our view and our comprehenſion is enlarged, as it were, every year of it! How conſiderable is the range and extent of human knowledge! Indeed, what we know is extremely little in compariſon with what we do not and cannot know; but ſtill of itſelf is much, much for creatures who are only at the firſt ſtage of rational thought; much for ſcholars, for novices who only date their time of living and thinking from yeſterday, and who are to live and think for ever. To what heights has the human intellect ſoared in numberleſs reſpects! how far has it not raiſed itſelf above viſible things! It has aſcended even to the deity, to the firſt, eternal cauſe of all things, and feels itſelf happy in the adoration of ſupreme perfection! How much does it not comprehend, ſurvey, and compare, by meditation! And where are the limits that it cannot abſolutely tranſcend! When has man learned ſo much, and ſo much exerciſed himſelf in thought, that he has not much more yet to learn, and may not employ himſelf much better? Who can reckon up the number of ideas and thoughts that may find place in one human mind of ordinary capacity; and when is the ſum total of them ſo great, that it may not yet

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be infinitely increaſed? Indeed, we neither can nor ſhould be all ſcholars, all employ the greateſt part of our lives in the inveſtigation of truth, in reflecting on intellectual objects, in the improvement and the augmentation of our knowledge. But we may all learn much, actually do learn much, and all advance many conſiderable paces on the path of knowledge and ſpiritual perfection. We may all learn to think, to think with conſciouſneſs, to think rationally: and if we be wiſe men, if we be chriſtians, we learn to controul ſenſuality, and to govern ourſelves; we learn to be virtuous, to be pious, to act upon ſound principles, from pure and generous motives; we learn to know God, to love him, to converſe and to have communication with him; and the longer we live and thus employ our lives, the better do we learn all this, the apter are we in all theſe matters, the more eaſily and ſucceſsfully can we apply our mental powers to them; the greater treaſures of more uſeful knowledge, and more correct perceptions do we lay up; the nearer do we approach our perfection. Something may be added to our acquirements every year, every day, every hour, and it is purely our own fault when this is not the caſe. Who would not then in this view cry out, with the pſalmiſt, Lord, let my ſoul live, and it ſhall praiſe thee! that it may be ever advancing in the knowledge of truth, in the knowledge of thee who art the original fountain of truth; that

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it may be always learning to think more juſtly, and always to employ its faculties in a better and worthier manner?

This life is farther of great value, it is highly deſirable, as in it we may attempt and achieve much good. And in fact, my dear friends, how much may we not do for ourſelves and for others, for the large and the little ſociety to which we belong! How far, either mediately or immediately, operate about us! What a manifold influence, and to what immenſe extent, may we have on the happineſs of our brethren! And to this purpoſe, we need neither be ſovereigns, nor ſtateſmen, nor heroes, nor inventors of new diſcoveries, nor leaders and teachers of the people; in every condition, in every ſtation, in every walk of life, in every lawful calling, we may daily and hourly effect ſome good. We have only to fulfil our obligations, to diſcharge them regularly in the beſt manner, only ever to travel on in the road of chriſtian integrity and virtue, and in every inſtance to do what love to God and man invites us to; ſo ſhall we ſpread goodneſs in general all around us, diſturbing none, injuring none, but rejoicing thouſands, and being uſeful to thouſands more. What a benign influence have order, application, induſtry, diligence, fidelity and conſcientiouſneſs in affairs, upon all with whom we have to do, who ſtand in nearer or remoter connections with us! What a genial light, what a reſplendent luſtre does

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every good, every generous example, throw round it, and how productive is it frequently in as good, as generous actions! How much may we do by words and by works, by the whole of our carriage among the members of our family, our acquaintance, our friends and our countrymen, and again by them among others, and probably among people utterly unknown to us, and far distant from us! Who can calculate all the blessed consequences often produced by a prudent piece of advice, a word well spoken with sentiment and energy, a truly christian act, an admonition seasonably introduced, some magnanimous sacrifice, some public-spirited undertaking — and which it will produce in future? And when are we wanting in an opportunity either of comforting some mourner, of cheering some victim of distress, of assisting some indigent, or relieving some poor and needy person? When is there a scarcity of opportunities for instructing the ignorant, for correcting and reforming the wicked, for confirming and delighting the good, for encouraging and supporting public institutions for the common benefit, and by all these means of providing for our own? How few days, how few hours of our lives unless by our own fault, pass quite destitute of occasions, quite void of incitements to do some kind of good, to further some beneficent designs, or to bring them to effect about us! May not therefore every day, every hour, we pass as wise men, as christians, increase the sum of the good we

do, and the ſum of human happineſs promoted by our means? And how great muſt this ſum be in the courſe of a whole life ſpent according to the precepts of chriſtian wiſdom and virtue! What think ye, my pious hearers, is a life, that may be ſo productive in good conſequences and effects, without any worth; muſt it not be of the higheſt value? May not a man ſay, upon the ſoundeſt principles, Let my ſoul live, and it ſhall praiſe thee, that it may glorify thee by righteouſneſs and beneficence, and like thee diffuſe more joy and felicity around?

This life has thirdly a great value, it is highly deſirable; as in it we may enjoy ſo much good. How manifold, how rich, how inexauſtible, are the ſources of pleaſure, ſatisfaction and joy, which God has prepared and opened for us, in nature, in religion, in domeſtic, in civil and human ſociety! Of what various and inexhauſtible impreſſions and feelings are we not rendered capable by our ſenſes, our underſtanding and our heart! Certainly, my dear friends, if we were leſs inattentive, leſs cold and inſenſible, than we but too frequently are, we ſhould be aſtoniſhed at the amount of the bleſſings we daily and hourly enjoy; we ſhould acknowledge and feel at our hearts, the preponderance, the great and manifeſt preponderance of good to evil in life; and, ſtruck with admiration and gratitude, ſhould exclaim, Lord, the whole earth and the whole of our lives are full of thy goodneſs! —

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What conſcious ſatisfaction in our abilities and our health have we had, during the greateſt part of our lives! What pleaſure accompanies eating and drinking, waking and ſleeping, employment and reſt, the uſe of our organs of ſenſe, and the application of our mental powers! What pleaſures do not ſilence, and lonely meditation, afford us, and what pleaſures ariſe from ſocial converſe and the communication of our thoughts and ſentiments to others! What joys attend the father and the mother of a family in the comforts of their dwelling, in the poſſeſſion of domeſtic felicity; what joys are prepared for the friend in the heart and in the company of his friend! And with what ſtill purer, ſtill higher joys, is the man, the chriſtian, bleſſed in the pious elevation of his heart to God, in the public and private adoration of him, in communion with the allperfect mind! What ſatisfaction, what agreeable, what delightful ſenſations follow upon every labour ſucceſsfully ended, every vanquiſhed difficulty, every affliction patiently ſuſtained, every good action, every victory over ourſelves, every advance to perfection, every proſpect of future happineſs! — And how much mitigation of toil, how much refreſhment and comfort in afflictions, how many helps in diſtreſs, how many means of eſcape, or how much courage and ſtrength in danger, how much hope even in miſery, does a wiſe and kind providence cauſe us to find within and without us; and how much light does all this

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ſhed even on the gloomier and leſs happy portions of our lives! Nay, my dear friends, what day, what hour of our lives, that does not ſome way or other teſtify of the kindneſs of our maker and preſerver, that does not bring with it ſome kind of ſatisfaction or pleaſure or comfort to the wiſe man and the chriſtian? And if ſome gloomy hours, ſome diſmal days ſucceed, how are they loſt among the far, far greater number of more happy, more delightful days and hours! But how great muſt be the value of ſuch a life, that is ſo rich in ſatisfactions and joys, to every man of reflection and ſentiment! What a precious boon muſt the preſervation and continuance of it be in his ſight! And how much reaſon has he to pray to God in the words of the pſalmiſt, Let my ſoul live, and it ſhall praiſe thee! that it may enjoy thy bounty, and praiſe thee for it with a joyful heart!

But that, my pious hearers, which gives the greateſt weight to theſe ſeveral reaſons for highly prizing human life, what renders it moſt deſirable, is, that during the courſe of it we may fit and capacitate ourſelves for better and greater objects in the world to come. Without this proſpect, our knowledge and ſpiritual perfection would have but little value, our virtue but little attraction and recompenſe, our joy but little ſatisfaction, and ſtill leſs continuance. Chiefly by the connection of the preſent with the future, by the influence this has upon that, all we now are and do and enjoy, is of

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real importance, and brings unending conſequences after it. At preſent we can do nothing for becoming wiſer, better and more pious, which does not prepare and ſmooth the way for us to a higher degree of perfection and happineſs in the future world. We can now perform no good deed that is not attended with everlaſting benefit. We now enjoy no innocent, generous delight, which does not render us capable of ſtill greater delights, and ſecure them to us. We are now working and labouring for eternity. Now even exertion and toil may become pleaſure, ſorrows become joys, and loſſes become gains. Here we are to learn, there to make the beſt uſe of what we have learnt; here to ſtrengthen our faculties by exerciſe, there to apply them to more important purpoſes; here to ſow good grain, there to reap of it happineſs and glory; here to fit ourſelves for converſe with ſuperior ſpirits, there actually to enjoy their converſe; here to reſemble Jeſus, our chieftain and lord, in virtuous and pious diſpoſitions, there in glory and bliſs; here approach nearer to the deity, there find the completion of all our aſpirations in more intimate communion with him. The longer then we live here, the more good we conceive and perform and promote and enjoy; the greater perfection and felicity await us hereafter. The purer and richer our ſowing here, the richer and more glorious will be our harveſt hereafter. Thus may every day and every hour of this life lay for us the

foundation of unfading honours, of ever blooming joys. And ſhall ſuch a life, a life attended by conſequences ſo great and continuing in eternity, ſhall ſuch a life be of no great value in our eyes? ſhall it not inſpire us with the wiſh of the pſalmiſt: Let my ſoul live, o God, and it ſhall praiſe thee! that it may here be expert in thy praiſe, and be able more worthily to praiſe thee hereafter!

Yes, my pious hearers, human life is inconteſtably of great and real value: the deſire of its preſervation and continuance is not unworthy either of the ſage or the chriſtian. It is the ſchool of wiſdom, the ſchool of virtue, the firſt ſtep to our perfection, a ſource of numberleſs ſatisfactions and pleaſures, the preparatory ſtation to a more exalted, to an everlaſting life. Rejoice then in it, rejoice in your life; thank God daily for this gift of his bounty; acknowledge and feel its value and its deſtination; ſupport, preſerve it carefully; uſe it worthily; purſue its affairs with pleaſure and fidelity; enjoy its ſatisfactions and delights with a grateful and a cheerful heart; bear its hardſhips and afflictions without murmuring; exerciſe your gifts and endowments; ſtrive conſtantly to learn more uſeful knowledge, conſtantly to do more good, to enjoy more pure and more generous ſatisfactions, conſtantly to become wiſer and better and more generally uſeful; be never weary in well-doing, and in promoting the happineſs of your fellow-creatures, ſince you may expect to reap in due time

time without ceaſing; work, like our great leader and precurſor Jeſus, while it is day, leſt the night come upon you before your taſk be finiſhed; carefully redeem the time, and mark as much as poſſible every day of your lives with ſome good action; regard and treat all things in reference to the future, and let the ſublime, the joyful ſentiment of a better, an everlaſting life be conſtantly preſent to your mind.

SERMON V.

The Value of Health.

GOD, who, amongſt the innumerable multitudes of creatures which thy almighty goodneſs called to be, haſt alſo given us exiſtence, praiſed be thy ſovereign bounty for all the graces and powers thou haſt beſtowed upon us, for all the pleaſures and joys of which thou haſt made us capable, for all the connections in which thou haſt placed us with viſible and inviſible objects, with the material and the ſpiritual world! Though we have much in common with the beaſts of the field, yet are we alſo related to the angels; we are thy offſpring. Yes, our body as well as our ſoul plainly witneſſes thy infinite intelligence, and the more than fatherly kindneſs with which thou doſt embrace and bleſs thy creatures. And the place that thou haſt aſſigned us in thy dominion, how adequate to our nature and deſtination! how adapted to draw forth and to exerciſe our capacities and powers, to form us into intelligent, wiſe and virtuous men, and thereby to prepare us for a ſuperior life! Lord, we humbly adore

adore thee, as our creator and father, rejoicing that we are, and that we are what thy wiſe goodneſs commanded us to be. Let us then, o bounteous parent, continually rejoice in our exiſtence and our nature, and grant that we may conſtantly ſeek our perfection and happineſs in the way wherein creatures ſuch as we are ſhould ſeek and attain them. Teach us to uſe our body and our mind, which are both thy property, according to thy will; to treat them both as a poſſeſſion committed to our truſt by thee, and ſo to nurture both, as becomes men, whom thou haſt indeed placed far above the irrational animals, yet not elevated to the rank of pure intelligences independent on terreſtrial wants. To the furtherance of theſe views, bleſs our reflections on the doctrines about to be delivered. Let us clearly perceive the value of the benefits which thou vouchſafeſt to us by the preſervation of our health and our abilities, and thus be incited to the beſt employment of them. We implore it of thee as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee further in his holy name: Our father, &c.

EPHES. V. 29.

No man ever yet hated his own fleſh; but nouriſheth and cheriſheth it, &c.

IT ſeems ſuperfluous to admoniſh mankind of the great value of health, and to urge them by many arguments to fulfil the duties incumbent upon them

in this reſpect. Who has not an abhorrence for whatever is called ſorrow and pain? Who is not delighted at being in good health? Who is not deſirous of preſerving it and retaining it unimpaired even to extreme old age? Who would purpoſely do anything that he is convinced will be prejudicial to him in reference to it? "No man," ſays the apoſtle in our text, "ever yet hated his own fleſh; "but nouriſheth and cheriſheth it." All this, my pious hearers, generally ſpeaking, is very true. But probably we do not conſider the matter ſufficiently as a duty. Perhaps we ſet not a ſufficient value upon health, or not upon right principles. Perhaps we do not plainly perceive how ſerviceable chriſtianity may be likewiſe in this reſpect to its true confeſſors. And from all theſe cauſes we certainly fall into many errors, which, if we had a plainer and juſter conception of the matter, we ſhould avoid. Well then, my dear friends, permit me now to ſubmit a few ſuggeſtions hereupon to your conſideration. And to this end, let us firſt examine into the value of health; then conſider the duties we have to fulfil in that reſpect; and laſtly inquire how well adapted the chriſtian doctrine is to aſſiſt us in the performance of theſe duties, and even in that view to promote our happineſs.

Health is unqueſtionably of great value. It is the firſt and principal of all the outward endowments we poſſeſs; the ground and means of the cheerful

cheerful enjoyment and beſt uſe of all the reſt. It is far more excellent than riches, than authority and honour, than all external pre-eminence how ſplendid ſoever; ſince, by the loſs or decay of this, they loſe almoſt the whole of their value. This is a fact which neither our own experience, nor that of others, will allow us to doubt. Would you ſenſibly feel this truth, my dear friends; only call to mind the hours, the days, you have probably paſt in ſickneſs and pain; the hours and the days in which you have been diſpirited, languid, enervated, utterly unfit for all uſeful occupations, for all arbitrary motion, for the enjoyment of the pleaſures and ſatisfactions of life; ſighing on a gloomy couch, and with every returning day, with every reſtleſs and anxious night, ſeeing nothing before you but freſh pains and ſufferings, or the total diſſolution of your body: and then compare with them the cheerfulneſs and alacrity that animate you now that you are in health; the delightful ſentiment that you have of your faculties; the eaſe and agility with which you move and uſe your body and all its members; the vivacity with which you enter upon and tranſact your buſineſs; the reliſh with which you can enjoy the ſatisfactions of life; the careleſs tranquillity with which at night you throw yourſelf into the arms of ſleep, and the ſprightlineſs with which you behold the riſing day. — Or, if you have been ſo happy as to have had no perſonal experience of pain and ſickneſs, viſit

your friends and acquaintance, who are groaning under the burden of ſuch afflictions, or leading a life of infirmity and languor, and for a moment put yourſelf in their place, and ſet their condition againſt yours: and, unleſs you are totally void of feeling, a genial conſciouſneſs of the high value of health will pervade your heart, accompanied by the ſincereſt gratitude to heaven; you will look upon it as the richeſt boon of life, as the endowment without which all others have hardly any worth.

And indeed, without health, what are all the beauties, the bounties, the delights, and the attractions of nature and ſociety? While all nature appears in feſtal ſplendor to the man in health; while the unclouded ſky, and the variegated earth, enamelled with flowers of a thouſand dyes, and breathing fragrant odours, expand his ſoul; while he, with jocund heart, unites in the general jubilee of all living creatures rejoicing in the ſenſation of exiſtence: the man labouring under ſickneſs and infirmity is but little if at all affected by it. All appears to him to wear the garb of woe; all ſeems to mourn around him, all deſolate and lifeleſs; and though he cannot be deaf to the rapturous ſounds of joy, yet he hears them but too often with inward loathing, and feels the irkſomeneſs of his life and his own deficiency of joy but ſo much the deeper. While the man in health is exerting his faculties and abilities, and availing himſelf of all his attainments, and thus magnifying the value of them in

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his own eyes; while he is enjoying the moſt diverſified pleaſures of eſteem and love, of friendſhip, of converſation; is finding on all ſides entertainment for his ſenſes, food for his mind, and his heart; and in theſe ſeveral reſpects is able to give as much as he receives: all this time the man confined by ſickneſs and infirmity to his cloſe apartment, to his gloomy couch, to a ſmall circle of people, who probably attend him more out of obligation and neceſſity than from affection, is perhaps a burden to himſelf and to others; ready to ſink under the preſſure of diſeaſe and ſorrow, unleſs he have learnt, to draw from ſources of contentment and ſolace in his own boſom! — No, without health, there is no real enjoyment of life, no inward genial ſentiment either of the mental or corporeal faculties, no eaſy, bold exertion of thoſe faculties; but inſtead a tormenting ſenſe of infirmities and pains, recollections of paſt, and anxious apprehenſions of future ſufferings, alarming declenſion of the vital energy, and dread of the ſucceſſive threats, the inſtant approach of its total extinction. And who can ſenſibly repreſent to himſelf this doleful condition, without feeling the value of its contraſt, the value of health?

Health has farther a great value, my pious hearers, as a means to higher purpoſes, as it may every way promote our moral perfection, and our uſefulneſs in the world. What can we not undertake and achieve, if we be but in health! How

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we are encouraged and animated to all things! For what labours and what undertakings do we think we have not ſufficient ability! What difficulties or obſtacles do we allow to deter us from them? How much eaſier is reflection and every application and uſe of our mental faculties! How much more ſucceſsfully do all our enterpriſes proceed! What exertion, what intrepidity, what perſeverance, are we not capable of with it! How little do we heed danger! How many adverſe events does it not enable us to bear, without being much agitated by them! How capable therefore are we of performing all, even the ſeverer duties of our ſtation, with cheerfulneſs and pleaſure, and of labouring at our own felicity, as well as that of our brethren, with alacrity and ſucceſs! How diſpoſed to diffuſe happineſs and joy of various kinds around us!

How very different is the caſe in general with ſuch as are in the contrary predicament! How various, how great is the detriment attending the diminution and the privation of health to ourſelves and to others, in a view to morality, to the performance of our duties, to the general utility! The want of health moſt commonly diſturbs and debilitates our mind; and in menacing the one with deſtruction, it likewiſe threatens the other with lethargy, ſupineneſs, and lifeleſs languor: now totally incapacitating us for profound and continued reflection; now rendering it extremely difficult;

cult; darkening and confuſing our former conceptions and ideas, and laying tremendous difficulties in the way of every attempt to exert our faculties. Frequently all light and truth and certainty vaniſh from before our eyes; darkneſs and doubt obnubilate our relaxed underſtanding, and our deadened heart can feel no influence of reviving hope, and is faſt ſhut againſt every emotion of the higher and nobler kinds. How apt are we to be led by the want of health to a ſullen and repining temper, to impatient murmurings, to diſcontentedneſs with our condition and the methods of providence! And how eaſily may all this diſpirit us in the purſuit of ſuperior perfection! how greatly prevent us from becoming ſo wiſe and ſo good as we otherwiſe might!

I am well aware, my pious hearers, that even afflictions and ſufferings of every kind, when rightly eſtimated and properly applied, may contribute much to our moral and intellectual perfection, that they are adapted to render us wiſer and better. But we need not be afraid, of ever feeling the want of ſuch ſufferings, though we perfectly underſtand the value of health, and fulfil our duties in the preſervation of it with the utmoſt conſcientiouſneſs and care. The inconſtancy of all external objects, the verſatility of fortune, the concern we take in the welfare of others, ſo many unſucceſsful labours, diſappointed expectations and inſuperable difficulties, will always furniſh us with opportu-

opportunities enough for exerciſing the wiſdom and virtues of chriſtianity. — And then certainly the fruit produced by a ſtrong and healthy tree on its natural ſoil, will be ſounder, riper, and of a finer flavour, than that which is forced by artificial heat to an unnatural maturity.

This is not all. Still more various and more grievous is the injury occaſioned by the loſs of health to ourſelves and to others, when we ourſelves are guilty of it: and this we muſt not omit to notice if we would view and judge the matter on its moral ſide, as in that reſpect it is of the utmoſt importance. By injuring or ruining our health, we become not only a burden to ourſelves, but are likewiſe troubleſome to thoſe who are connected with us, or dependent on us. We communicate uneaſineſs, anxiety, ſorrow, melancholy to all about us, in a narrower or a larger circle, according to our ſituation in life. We wound and afflict ſome, and ſtimulate others to impatience, to anger, to a culpable breach of their duties. — Nay, more; we thereby injure the whole community to which we belong. We rob it of our ſervices, or add to their burdens who had already enough to to bear. We deprive ourſelves of the means and the opportunities of being uſeful to others, or of promoting their intereſts in a higher degree. We perhaps ſtop ſhort in the faireſt and moſt laudable courſe of action, and leave our beſt works and undertakings unfiniſhed. And from what ſources

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of ſatisfaction and pleaſure for future times, and even for eternity, do we thus exclude ourſelves!

By impairing and ruining our health, we not unfrequently do an irreparable injury to ſuch as have the juſteſt title to our intire affection, as being connected with us in the cloſeſt ties. We cut them off from the advice, the protection, the aſſiſtance, the proviſion, they have the ſtricteſt right to expect from us, and which they cannot ſo confidently hope to receive from any other. We thereby plunge them perhaps into the utmoſt indigence and diſtreſs, bring them to the brink of ruin, and leave them a prey to poverty, to ſeduction, to miſery. Let fathers and mothers particularly reflect upon this; and when they are tempted to extravagance, intemperance and voluptuouſneſs, to violent paſſions, or to whatever elſe may be hurtful to their health, let them caſt one ſerious pitying look on their uneducated, helpleſs infants, or children who ſtand ſtill more in need of their advice and care; or on the dear partner of their life; and ſurely it muſt recall them to the diſcharge of their duties and make it again their delight!

Nay, it happens not unfrequently, that he who impairs or deſtroys his health by irregular living, renders himſelf guilty of a crime againſt his whole poſterity, and entails miſery and death even upon thoſe who open their eyes to the light of the world not till long after he is no more. Children born of infirm, unhealthy parents, commonly become parents of children ſtill more unhealthy and infirm,

and theſe produce again a like poſterity, till the race, ſinking deeper and deeper under the burden of its various diſeaſes and infirmities, at length dies out and is extinct.

So variouſly and ſo widely diffuſed are the miſchiefs that ariſe from the impairment and the ruin of our health to ourſelves and to others, that our account muſt be heavy when it proceeds from our own guilty conduct.

And now, my pious hearers, ſhould any man ſeek his honour and renown in it; ſhall we pretend to call it true courage or fortitude of mind, to deſpiſe all care of our health, or not to be œconomical of it; to truſt to our youth or our ſtrength, and purpoſely lay ſiege to it, in a manner, by irregularity and exceſs, and ſlight the admonitions of prudence? No, it is raſhneſs; folly, inexcuſable folly, for a man wantonly to endanger the loſs of ſo invaluable, ſo indiſpenſable a bleſſing of life, and to bring upon himſelf and others ſuch manifold, and frequently ſuch irreparable miſchiefs. — Conſider this, all you that are ſtill in the bloom of life, in the full poſſeſſion of your energies. Reflect upon it not barely in reference to the preſent, but alſo to the future. Practiſe not with your health and ſtrength, as if they could never be weakened or worn out. Conſume them not in the ſervice of vice, or a looſe and irregular conduct. Never forget that in advanced years many occupations and duties, many troubles and afflictions await you, which will then prove

prove heavy or light to you, as you have managed your early years and your youthful vigour.

And let no man ſay, when he exceeds the bounds of moderation in eating and drinking, in anger or any other paſſion: That is my buſineſs; if I do an injury I do it to myſelf alone; it is I that muſt ſuffer and do penance for my folly. Certainly thou wilt, whoever thou art that thinkeſt and ſpeakeſt thus; thou wilt ſuffer and do penance for it, and probably much more, and much longer than thou doſt at preſent imagine; and thou wilt ſuffer what thou haſt deſerved. But thou canſt not ſuffer alone, others muſt ſuffer with thee; and they innocently ſuffer. Is this no injuſtice? no crime? does this deſerve no puniſhment? Or how? Can the father of a family, can the mother of a family, can the public functionary in the ſtate or in the church, can one whom God has endowed with particular gifts and accompliſhments, can any one who ſtands in connection with others, impair and ruin his health, loſe his faculties by the abuſe of them, render himſelf unfit for his buſineſs and the duties of his calling, without injuring at the ſame time many others, directly or indirectly, at preſent, or in the ſequel, in body or in mind, without diminiſhing the total amount of abilities, and the good ariſing from them to the whole.

Can we reflect upon all this, my dear friends, and entertain the ſmalleſt doubt that health is of very great value; that the abuſe and wilful neglect of it are highly criminal, that it is by no means indifferent

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how we behave in regard of it? — And how then ſhould we conduct ourſelves in this regard? What are the duties we have here to obſerve?

We ſhould above all things eſteem health as a gift of the divine bounty, granted us for important purpoſes and intimately connected with our perfection and happineſs. And here we are to avoid certain falſe conceptions of the little value and low deſtination of the human body; conceptions in purſuance whereof it is not unfrequently repreſented as the priſon, as the dungeon of the ſoul, the clog and impediment to its perfection. All ſuch repreſentations are the offspring of a gloomy, peeviſh diſpoſition, or of a heated, enthuſiaſtic imagination, inducing a man to pretend to be more than he is or can be, to be diſſatisfied with the rank aſſigned him by his maker, and to vainly exalt himſelf into a totally different claſs of beings. Hence it is, that ſenſual appetites and gratifications are too often confounded with ſinful appetites and gratifications; and by condemning the former together with the latter, the body, as the cauſe and the inſtrument of them, is conſidered as ſomething vile and detrimental to our perfection. No, my pious hearers, the body, at leaſt in our preſent ſtate, belongs as eſſentially to the nature of man, as the ſoul; and it is the conjunction of both which makes man to be what he is. As the body without the ſoul would not be man, but a machine or an inanimate organized ſuſtance; ſo neither would the ſoul without the body be man, but a ſpirit or rather a ſpiritual being, whoſe thinking faculty could probably

bably never be unfolded and produced in action but for this conjunction. The chriſtian doctrine too, that heavenly wiſdom, completely coincides with this idea. It always conſiders man as man, and treats him as man, as a compound being, and not as ſome ſpirit, confined during a ſeries of years for its puniſhment to this earthly ſhell. It enjoins us indeed to govern our body and our ſenſual appetites; but not to deſpiſe the former, or eradicate the latter. It gives us to expect after this life a new, but a more perfect and more durable tenement or tabernacle than the preſent; and conſoles us, not ſo much with the hope of being ſoon delivered from this body, as by the aſſurance that we ſhall receive it again at the reſurrection of the dead, or that from the germ within it, a new one, more glorious and incorruptible ſhall expand around us. — Neither reaſon nor ſcripture therefore command us to deſpiſe our body and its welfare; but we are taught by both to prize and to rejoice in the health and ſtrength of it as real important benefits to man, as an eſtimable preſent of divine munificence.

But, if it be ſo great a privilege, ſo great a preſent, it is further our duty, on one hand, to avoid all things that may deprive us of it, or diſturb us in the poſſeſſion or enjoyment of it; and on the other to neglect nothing that may ſupport and confirm it. On this head you do not certainly, my pious hearers, expect that I can give you particular inſtructions. Every perſon muſt in this reſpect pay attention to

himſelf; obſerve the noxious or ſalutary effects, which external objects as well as internal revolutions in the ſtate of his mind have upon his body and his health; compare and contraſt together his bodily conſtitution, his faculties, his affairs, his circumſtances; and then conduct himſelf according to the information he acquires from often repeated and careful obſervations and experiences. We ſhould however, — and this is what as a teacher of religion I ought to recommend to you, and can with the utmoſt confidence recommend, — we ſhould cultivate temperance, peace of mind, contentment; we ſhould lead a buſy, laborious, innocent and blameleſs life, free from all anxious, unchriſtian cares: we ſhould judge of the good or bad quality of things, of their utility or their hurtfulneſs, not barely from their preſent effects, but from their future conſequences, what, ſooner or later, they may and probably will produce; we ſhould lay it down as an inviolable law, never for the ſake of a ſhort preſent pleaſure to run the hazard of impairing our health, or of laying the foundation of longer ſufferings in future, of continued infirmity; neither ſhould we ever ſhun any unpleaſant and difficult affair, merely becauſe it is at preſent unpleaſant and difficult, or lays us under ſome reſtraint; we ſhould in ſhort never forget that our powers are circumſcribed, that we cannot exhauſt them without detriment and danger, that we ſhould deal œconomically with them, and that we ſhall always be able to execute more by them,

them, if we uſe them for a conſiderable ſeries of years with prudent moderation, than if by a too ſevere and uninterrupted exertion of them, we ſhould ſhortly render them utterly unſerviceable.

Again, we ſhould not, and this is a third duty we have to obſerve in this reſpect, — we ſhould not pamper our body, not leave our powers to ſtagnate for fear of exhauſting them; never decline any duty for fear of injuring our health; and if we do but lead a temperate and regular life, we need not frequently, not anxiouſly dwell on all the poſſible conſequences of every, the leaſt and moſt indifferent action of life, or on every ſcarcely perceptible alteration in our body. Leaſt of all ſhould we be ſwayed by this timidity, or this anxiety, in our moral conduct, in what we owe to God and to our neighbour. No, our duty ſhould be the weightieſt of all weighty concerns. This we ſhould punctually endeavour to diſcharge, as often as it comes in our way and we have ability for it, even though the conſequences of it, in regard to our health, ſhould not always be the beſt. Theſe conſequences we ſhould calmly leave to God, who has laid thoſe duties on us, and has given us ability and opportunity to fulfil them, and on whoſe good pleaſure it entirely depends, how long or how ſhort a time, and in what meaſure we are to promote his views in the world and the intereſts of our fellow-creatures. Eſtimable as health and life may be, yet both of them loſe their value, when they are purchaſed by an intentional violation of

duty, by a conduct at variance with the will of God, and therefore at the expenſe of his approbation and a quiet conſcience, or if they are to be preſerved by becoming an inactive, uſeleſs, or even a noxious member of ſociety. Even in this reſpect may it be ſaid "Whoſoever will ſave his life," by the ſacrifice of his conſcience and his duty, "ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever will loſe his life for my ſake," for the ſake of integrity and virtue, "ſhall find it."

This, my pious hearers, is the rational, the chriſtian concern for our health; a concern fully adequate to the great value of it. If we would act up to our duty in this reſpect, we muſt take the chriſtian doctrine to our aſſiſtance. It is in an extraordinary manner adapted to facilitate our performance of it, and to promote our happineſs alſo in this view. A few ſhort obſervations will ſet the matter beyond all doubt.

The great commandment of the chriſtian doctrine is love to God and to our neighbour. This it makes the principle of all our duties; on this it builds the whole of our happineſs. And if we faithfully adhere and conform to this commandment; if we are ſincerely actuated by love to God and man: the health of our body muſt neceſſarily be greatly benefited by it. For, as much as envy, hatred, anger, malice, revenge, are injurious and deſtructive not only to the mind, but alſo to the body; ſo are love, kindneſs, gentleneſs, peaceableneſs and friendſhip benign and refreſhing to them both. If thoſe corrupt violent paſſions, like a virulent poiſon,

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occaſion diſorder and dilapidation in the whole man, by ſetting not only his thoughts, but likewiſe his blood and vital ſpirits in the moſt hurtful agitation, and keeping them as it were in a continual fermentation: ſo, on the contrary, the gentle and humane ſentiments of benevolence and love, produce peace and tranquillity, regularity and harmony in the body as well as in the mind; allow no irregular emotion to ſwell into violence, but diffuſe life and joy, like a precious balm, through all the human creature. — And love to God, my dear friends, how beneficial, how ſalutary muſt it likewiſe be in this reſpect! If we meditate upon him with a ſteady complacency, with delight and filial confidence; if we conſtantly rejoice in his bounty, and, in all the good we have and do and enjoy, are ever perceiving and feeling freſh teſtimonies of his fatherly providence; if we revere his hand in all that happens, as the hand of the wiſe and gracious parent of the univerſe; if we never forget that we live under his guardianſhip and inſpection; if we expect of him only good and conſtantly the beſt; — and he who loves God does all this; — how much courage, how much life and joy muſt it infuſe into our frame! From how many corroding cares, from how many anxious troubles, muſt it ſecure us! How many kinds of fear and terror muſt it avert from us! How very much muſt it alleviate the afflictions and troubles of life! — And who does not perceive what a ſalutary influence all

this muſt have on the preſervation of our faculties, the vivacity and the health of mankind!

Chriſtian love moreover inculcates temperance and moderation. Not only temperance in regard to eating and drinking, and all other kinds of animal gratification; but moderation alſo in regard of our appetites and exertions for riches and honour, for power and authority, and other external diſtinctions. It teaches us not to look upon theſe things as our ſovereign good, not as neceſſary and indiſpenſable parts of our happineſs, not as the ultimate object of our purſuit: and if we wiſh for them and ſeek them, our deſires ſhould never become paſſions, nor our endeavours be accompanied by reſtleſs anxiety. To whom is it not apparent, how advantageous ſuch a moderation muſt be to man in regard to his health? If the former, he who is paſſionately purſuing riches and honours, or other tranſitory goods, ſoon exhauſts his ſtrength; if he loſe his temper on meeting with any diſappointment, any unexpected obſtacle, if every triumph of his adverſary or rival puts his blood in a feveriſh heat, or delivers him up to a dark and ſullen deſpondency, which he carries about with him wherever he goes, and like a ſubtile poiſon, undermines his health: yet the latter, he who cultivates chriſtian moderation, remains calm and reſigned; he requires nothing impoſſible in his circumſtances and his ſituation; is not ſurpriſed at the croſſes and diſappointments he meets with in his endeavours;

deavours; commits the iſſue of them to God and to his wife diſpoſal; and having learnt with the apoſtle in the ſchool of Jeſus, how to ſuffer want and how to abound, and withal to be content, the compoſure of his mind may indeed at times be ruffled, but never entirely deſtroyed; at times he may feel ſtronger, irregular emotions and ſenſations ſtirring in his breaſt, but they will never ſwell into ungovernable and deſtructive paſſions. — And how many dangers does he thus eſcape in regard to his health and his life!

The chriſtian doctrine excites its followers and ſupplies them with the beſt motives to vivacity and mirth. It frees them from all needleſs cares, and inſpires them with a determined courage. It teaches them to be ſatisfied with God, with themſelves, with the world, with the ſtate aſſigned them by providence; it accuſtoms them to fix their attention more upon the good than upon the evil that is in the world amongſt mankind, and to enjoy all the good they can whenever and wherever and with whomſoever they find it; and this keeps them in a gay and ſprightly mood by opening to them on all ſides ſources of emotion no leſs innocent and virtuous than briſk and lively. Now aſk the phyſician, how much ſuch a ſtate of mind and temper contributes to the maintenance or recovery of health and ſtrength. He will tell you, that in moſt caſes, what his whole art has not been able to effect in many years, ſerenity of mind and good humour alone

have brought to paſs in a few months or even a few days.

The chriſtian doctrine holds out to us in ſhort hopes equally magnificent and infallible in regard to futurity. It promiſes us the aſſiſtance and protection of the Almighty in whatever can befall us. It opens to us the faireſt proſpects in a better, an everlaſting life after death; therefore deprives this enemy of his terrors, and alleviates to us every misfortune and diſaſter by the expectation of a felicity, which will ſatisfy all our deſires and be more than an equivalent for all our privations and ſufferings; and no affection of the mind according to the beſt judges of human nature, is ſo adapted to the ſupport of our faculties and health, as hope which is not counteracted or diminiſhed by any anxious doubts, as cheerful proſpects into futurity, on which we firmly rely.

Judge from all this, my pious hearers, how genial and benign the chriſtian doctrine is. Perhaps you have ſeldom reflected on the vaſt influence it may have on your bodily health. And yet nothing is more certain. Nay it renders the whole man, I mean the man whoſe whole heart and mind are actuated and governed by it, it renders him thoroughly happy in body and ſoul, both in the preſent and the future world. Oh let this confirm and ſtrengthen your eſteem and love for that divine doctrine to which you are indebted for it. Make yourſelves more and more acquainted with its max-

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ims, which elevate the mind, comfort the heart, and perfect the entire man; follow more firmly and faithfully its precepts, which all tend to your happineſs. Let the love of God and man abide and govern in you; continually exerciſe yourſelves in chriſtian moderation; endeavour by a right way of thinking, by an innocent and virtuous life, to kindle and ſupport an eaſy, cheerful confidence; be ever fixing your hopes more immoveably on a bleſſed immortality, and learn to enjoy your future happineſs by anticipation: ſo will you aſſuredly promote the health and vigour of your body, as well as the health and vigour of your mind, obviate a thouſand dangers and calamities, be leſs ſenſible to the unavoidable inconveniences and troubles of life, much more fully enjoy its ſatisfactions and pleaſures, and in all reſpects be happy.

SERMON VI.

The Value of Riches.

GOD, creator and preſerver of all things, from thee proceeds all good, and all that proceeds from thee is good — has the advancement of our perfection and happineſs in view! To this end thou diſpenſeſt riches and poverty, abundance and want in extremely various and manifold proportions. Some of thy children thou ſetteſt as guardians and monitors over the others; to ſome thou committeſt much, to others little; that all may mutually give and mutually receive, each according to the talent thou haſt imparted to him; that thereby the whole of thy large family on earth may be as well educated and as happy, as it at preſent can be. We humbly adore thy wiſe bounty, o merciful Father, and deſire to revere it, with entire acquieſcence and ſatisfaction, even when we cannot fully comprehend thy meaſures and diſpenſations. Only teach us, we heartily implore thee, only teach us to employ for the beſt what thou thinkeſt

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fit to entruſt us with, be it little or much, to look conſtantly in the uſe of it to thee and to thy will, and never to forget that we are not proprietors but ſtewards of thy bounties. Let us to that end thoroughly ſtudy the value and the appointment of terreſtrial things and conſtantly hold them for what they are, and what they particularly ſhould be to us, that we may never more highly prize them, never be more ſtrongly attached to them, never more vehemently ſeek them, than they deſerve. To the furtherance of theſe deſigns, bleſs the obſervations we now intend to deliver. Let us clearly and with conviction diſcern the truth, and let it become in us a principle of good diſpoſitions and actions. We offer up our petitions to thee in this behalf in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, our lord, and further call upon thee, as he vouchſafed to teach us: Our father, &c.

LUKE xii. 15.

A man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.

JUDGMENTS, my pious hearers, concerning the value of riches have been in all times and are ſtill very various; as different as the perceptions, the tempers, the circumſtances, the wants and the views of mankind. With one man riches are everything; with another nothing; to the former they

they are moſt eſſential, moſt covetable; to the latter a contemptible ſpurious good: to thoſe the means of happineſs — nay, happineſs itſelf; to theſe the road to perdition, the ſource of cares and miſery. Some aſſert the moſt ſtrenuous purſuit of riches to be a worthy and an honourable employment; others think they ſhould leſſen and degrade themſelves by it. The former have the ſuffrages of the generality of mankind in their favour; while the latter have indeed all the moraliſts on their ſide, but very few of any other deſcription of men. They are both in the wrong, my pious hearers. The one ſort attribute too much to riches; and the other aſcribe to them too little value. The one turns what only is and can be a means to happineſs, into happineſs itſelf; and the other confounds riches with avarice, or with their abuſe. Mankind, in judging of the real value of riches, have generally beheld, and they ſtill occaſionally behold them merely in the view of poſſeſſion and not in the uſe of them; and, then the auſtere moraliſt who totally rejects them, is undoubtedly more in the right than his opponent.

In our days the value of riches in this reſpect, namely in regard to poſſeſſion and uſe, is otherwiſe and generally better eſtimated, than it was on the whole, twenty or perhaps ten years ago. It happens now comparatively but ſeldom, that riches are amaſſed merely for the ſake of amaſſing, that men ſtrive to be rich, only that they may be rich, accumulate,

mulate, merely that they may poſſeſs much. At preſent all are inclined to enjoy, all make uſe of their property or their wealth; and in all probability, if the preſent taſte continues, ſome thirty or forty years hence, very few immenſely rich perſons will be found among us. At any rate, the preſent is the ſmaller error of the two. Enjoyment is better than poſſeſſion. A moderate property that a man makes uſe of, is better than a greater unemployed. But every kind of enjoyment and uſe is not equally innocent; every one is not reſpectable; only one is the right. — And then likewiſe this judgment concerning the value of riches, however juſt it may be, is not therefore complete. We ſhould conſider them, not only in reference to poſſeſſion and enjoyment, but alſo to their acquiſition; not barely attend to their influence on our outward circumſtances, but likewiſe to their influence on our natural and moral perfection; and then paſs our verdict on them, not merely according to what they are in reſpect to us, but in reſpect to others and to the community at large. And this we will now endeavour to do, my pious hearers. We will firſt accurately examine and aſcertain the value of riches; and then deduce ſome reſults from it.

Our Saviour gives us in our text the true principle for aſcertaining the value of riches. A man's life conſiſteth not, ſays he, in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth. That is, no one is

happy merely becauſe he is rich. And yet ſuch numbers of perſons, perhaps the generality of mankind, think that nothing, abſolutely nothing but riches is wanting to make them happy? But Jeſus underſtood mankind and their wants much better than they commonly do themſelves. For being happy, it is neceſſary that we ſhould have a ſound and right underſtanding, a well-regulated, pious, contented heart; and he that poſſeſſes ſuch a mind and ſuch a heart, is happy, be he poor or be he rich; and he to whom theſe are wanting, can never be happy, even though he lives in the greateſt abundance. We will not however confine ourſelves at preſent merely to this declaration, however true and important, but endeavour to form perſpicuous ideas of the nature and condition of the ſubject, in its whole extent.

Riches, taken in the abſtract, without reference to their uſe, have no value whatever. This is clear to every reflecting perſon. What would it avail me, who at the utmoſt can only hope to live ſeventy or eighty years in the world, if I could heap together and lay up in ſafe cuſtody ſo great a ſtock of proviſions, of raiment of every kind, of the implements of conveniency and pleaſure, as in the ſpace of two or more centuries I could neither conſume, nor uſe, nor enjoy? Suppoſe now money, gold and ſilver, in the ſtead of theſe proviſions, thoſe cloaths, and thoſe implements of conveniency and pleaſure; will they have acquired a greater value

value becauſe I have changed them into metal? Is this metal any thing but the ſign of my pretenſions on ſo much proviſion, cloaths and the implements of conveniency or pleaſure? And is not the ſign as inſignificant to me as the materials themſelves, if I do not or cannot make uſe of either? Should I not be in the ſame ſituation as a man who orders an hundred diſhes to be daily ſet before him and keeps them all to himſelf, and yet can only taſte of a few? or in the ſituation of a man who poſſeſſed a hundred convenient and ſpacious manſions of his own property, and yet could only dwell in one? — This then is a plain proof, that riches without regard to the uſe of them are nothing; deſerve not the ſmalleſt eſtimation, nor are worth the leaſt endeavours to obtain. And on this ſide muſt the generality of moraliſts, ancient and modern, have conſidered them, when they pronounced them to be only ſpurious goods, and enjoined their diſciples to deſpiſe them altogether, or to behold them with the utmoſt indifference.

But they have undoubtedly other and better points of view in which they appear a real advantage, or as the means of procuring us real and permanent advantages; in which they deſerve the eſteem and moderate endeavours of the wiſe man, and even by the chriſtian need not be held indifferent. On this ſide we will now conſider them, for fixing their real value. We will ſee what they

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are and may be in reſpect to their poſſeſſor, and what in reſpect to the whole community.

In regard to their poſſeſſor, riches that have been earned have a greater value than thoſe obtained by inheritance. I take it for granted that the man has acquired them by lawful means, without wounding his conſcience, or neglecting his higher duties; and that he has procured them not by one or a few fortunate caſualties, but by a regular and continued induſtry. He that has acquired riches by this means, cannot but have more or leſs promoted his intrinſic ſpiritual perfection thereby; and in the very acquirement of them has found an actual and laſting benefit, without regard either to the poſſeſſion or enjoyment of them. For, while thus acquiring riches he unfolds and exerciſes his mental faculties, employs and ſtrengthens them. The buſineſs he carries on; the plans he forms; the experiments he makes; the connections he enters into with others, and which they maintain with him; the favourable or unfavourable circumſtances that ariſe; the various diſpoſitions of the perſons with whom he has to do; the multifarious revolutions in taſte and faſhion, ſometimes advantageous and ſometimes adverſe to him; the ſudden and unexpected turns that certain affairs and tranſactions take; the dangers which threaten him; the delightful proſpects that open to his view; the frequent changes of fortune, and the uncertainty

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of all human affairs: all theſe excite obſervation, reflection, attention, conſideration, ingenuity, foreſight, courage, fortitude, diſcernment of character and knowledge of the world. He muſt compare a hundred and a hundred things of various kinds together, combine them, and never loſe ſight of them. He muſt lay plans, execute them as time and opportunity ſerve, alter them, contract, extend and leave them to their courſe; he muſt keep his eye at once on the paſt, the preſent and the future; muſt now work without viſible profit, now purpoſely ſuffer loſs, that he may thereby aſſure himſelf of greater advantage or gain hereafter; muſt now retreat, and now ſtand ſtill; now reſolve on the ſpot, and then deliberate warily; now repair paſt errors, and then beware of freſh miſtakes. And what a diverſity of mental exertions muſt all this require! How much more intelligent, prudent, ingenious, acute and conſiderate, muſt he be, how much greater knowledge both of men and things muſt he poſſeſs, who has been twenty, thirty or more years in acquiring riches, and that by the more important and intricate kinds of buſineſs! I ſay, how much farther muſt he be advanced in all theſe reſpects, than he would have been, if he had paſſed all this time in idleneſs, or had only earned a bare ſubſiſtence by an eaſy and ſlight employment! And if he be at the ſame time a virtuous and pious man, what opportunities and trials and exerciſes of ſincerity, of

fidelity, of equity, of humanity, of generoſity, of beneficence, of integrity, of moderation, of conſtancy, of diſcretion, and of affiance in God, muſt he have had all this time, which in the oppoſite caſe he could not have had; and how much muſt he thus be ſtrengthened and confirmed in all theſe virtues! Certainly the acquiring of his wealth muſt have been of great and real value to him; and if, through ſome unavoidable accidents, he ſhould happen to loſe the fruits of his induſtry, yet will his principal advantages ſtill remain to him; he will thereby have promoted his ſpiritual perfection for all future times.

But if the proper acquiſition of riches be an excellent means for the evolution and exerciſe of our mental faculties; the legitimate uſe and the prudent employment of riches, once acquired, is not leſs ſo, and thereby alſo they become of real value in regard to the poſſeſſor. What advantage, what actual and laſting advantage, may they not procure him, if he employ them in a wiſe and chriſtian manner! How many means of information, and intellectual pleaſure, may they not procure him, which otherwiſe he muſt abſolutely forego! How much time may he employ in the cultivation of his mind, in the augmentation of his knowledge, in the refinement of his taſte, in the improvement of his heart, which he would be otherwiſe obliged to conſume in hard, fatiguing, diſpiriting and ſervile labours! How many inſtructive converſations may

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he have with wife and good men, to whom otherwiſe he probably could never gain acceſs! How many conveniences and ſatisfactions of domeſtic and ſocial life may he enjoy, which otherwiſe he could not!

And what ſhall I ſay of the pleaſures of beneficence? What a value does that confer on riches to him who knows how to employ them aright! How much more comfort and help and life and joy may he ſpread around him! How many more tears wipe away from the eyes of the poor and deſtitute! How much oftner be ſight to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the orphan, and a ſupport to the widow! How much more frequently may he ſupply the place of Jeſus, the helper and ſaviour of men, among his brethren! How much more ſubſtantially may he encourage and ſupport uſeful inſtitutions for the public good, than if he were neceſſitous himſelf, or confined to the ſupply of his own perſonal wants! And if he may do this, and actually does it, and has a heart to feel the charms of doing good, how dear, how eſtimable muſt his riches be to him, as often as he employs them to ſuch noble purpoſes! What a ſource of felicity, of pure human and godlike joy, muſt they then prove to him, whereas otherwiſe, if he left them unuſed, or even miſemployed them in folly and vice, they would not have the ſmalleſt worth!

In ſhort, my pious hearers, riches have, in another point of view, a very great value in regard of their poſſeſſor, only however in reference to the

beſt and worthieſt of ſuch as have them. To them they are the means of perfect independence, and thereby of free judgment concerning truth and falſehood, right and wrong, honour and ſhame; the means of ſhewing a firm and manly behaviour towards high and low, ſuperiors and inferiors; means of more effectually ſupporting and promoting civil and religious liberty. The leſs a man is ſolicitous about his own ſupport and advancement in the world, the leſs his outward circumſtances depend on the approbation and opinions of others; the more he can ſacrifice and ſpare of his own fortune without becoming poor, or ſuffering want: the leſs temptation has he to flatter others, to debaſe himſelf before the great and mighty by any cringing deportment, implicitly to ſubſcribe to their opinions, or court their favour by criminal compliance or ſervile obſequiouſneſs: the more freely may he think and determine for himſelf, follow his own perceptions, feelings, inclinations; the more is he able to ſupport the feeble, to refreſh the weary and to relieve the oppreſſed; the more impreſſively defend the innocent; the more courageouſly withſtand the abuſe of power, the wiles of ſubtlety, the plots and the confederacies of the wicked; the leſs need he be afraid to proteſt againſt prevailing prejudices, abuſes and follies, and to diſtinguiſh himſelf from others by an inviolable love of truth and integrity, by a free and impartial eſtimation of men and things,

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and by a ſtrict, or, if you pleaſe to call it ſo, an auſtere courſe of virtue. — Happy, reſpectable people, who thus employ their wealth, on whoſe principles and conduct it has this effect! To them it is a very eſtimable boon of providence; to them it is aſſuredly of great and never-ending value!

But riches unqueſtionably are of great value in reſpect of the community at large; that is, it is uſeful and beneficial to ſociety, that what are called the goods of fortune ſhould not be diſtributed in equal parts among the members of it, but that ſome ſhould poſſeſs a ſuperfluity of them. The wealth that is not ſuffered to lie idle, but is either employed in acquiring more, or is diſperſed abroad and kept in circulation, increaſes the ſtock of life and activity among mankind. It promotes the induſtry, the application and the diligence of the whole community. Here it calls forth mechanical, and there mental powers, to the advancement of the general good. To theſe it is an incitement and means to the diſcovery of more uſeful and agreeable inventions; while it furniſhes an opportunity to thoſe for ingenious imitations and improvements of the materials of conveniency and pleaſure already diſcovered.

The more rich members and men of property any ſociety contains, the leſs reaſon has the huſbandman, the artificer, the artiſt, the merchant, the ſcholar, to fear leſt his labour ſhould be in vain; the more encouragement have they all to

purſue their work with alacrity, to exert their talents and ingenuity to the utmoſt, and to carry their workmanſhip and commerce to the higheſt poſſible perfection.

By riches many of the accommodations and elegancies of life are rendered more common; the taſte for what is beautiful, ſolid and good is heightened; the ſtock of uſeful knowledge is increaſed; the aſperity of manners is ſoftened; and all theſe advantages extend themſelves gradually farther and wider even among thoſe ranks and claſſes of men which are not rich, but are yet capable of greater improvement and a pleaſanter mode of exiſtence.

By riches various nations and countries, near and remote, are more cloſely connected together. They have more communication with each other, can mutually impart their goods and produce, the fruits of their induſtry, the works of art, the light of the ſciences, and a thouſand things which promote their perfection and happineſs; whereas otherwiſe nations, countries, individuals would be confined to what their own ſoil, their own induſtry, their own ſtock of talents and abilities, were capable of producing. By the circulation of wealth therefore every one works for all, and all for every one; and hence the products of the moſt diſtant regions, the works and manufactures of the remoteſt nations, the thoughts and perceptions of the wiſe and learned of countries ſeparated by vaſt continents or oceans, are exchanged, bartered, propagated, multiplied, wrought up, and produce on every ſide, in a greater

a greater or leſs degree, in one manner or another, life, activity, pleaſure, joy, knowledge and the enjoyment of good.

How many difficult, but important and public-ſpirited enterpriſes in ſhort could neither be undertaken nor completed, without the help of riches! Concerns, in the undertaking of which a man muſt venture much, in the proſecution of them muſt labour long without profit or reward, which muſt be both begun and executed in the bare hope of a future, far diſtant, and uncertain benefit! How many good eſtabliſhments would never have been brought to effect, how many products of nature would never have been wrought up, how many works of art never completed, how many kinds of induſtry never diſcovered or purſued, how many branches of commerce never cultivated and rendered flouriſhing, if ſociety had contained no wealthy members, who, from benevolence towards their brethren, or even from motives of ſelf-intereſt, from ambition, from an uncommon degree of activity, had not undertaken and promoted ſuch things, and been able to employ and devote conſiderable ſums to the planning and commencing, the proſecution and completion of them!

Riches have therefore undeniably a real value, no leſs in regard of their poſſeſſor than of ſociety at large; they are capable of promoting the benefit and advancing the happineſs of both in various ways; conſidered in this reſpect, they are not a

deceitful, but a ſubſtantial good; they are by no means to be deſpiſed and rejected as ſuch, but merit the eſteem and the moderate purſuit of the wiſe man and the chriſtian.

But what is the conſequence, if we thus eſtimate the value of riches, if we reckon them exactly for what they are?

It follows, that riches, to him who barely poſſeſſes them, without uſing them, or without uſing them aright, have no value whatever — nothing good or deſirable in them. Neither his underſtanding nor his heart is the better for them; he is neither more excellent, nor more happy. Some means to become ſo he has; but ſo long as he does not employ them, it is the ſame to him as if he had them not. His riches therefore give him no real precedence; and if notwithſtanding he boaſt of them, he ſuffers himſelf to be deceived by a vain appearance, and boaſts that he, according to his circumſtances, might and ought to be wiſer, better and happier, than he really is.

It follows farther, that riches, when once earned or otherwiſe obtained, procure the leaſt advantage, even to their prudent and worthy poſſeſſor, and on the other hand the greateſt to the ſociety wherein he lives; that therefore his advantage conſiſts more in the honour of being the acquirer, the collector, the manager, the keeper and the diſtributor of the property belonging to many of the community, than in the excluſive enjoyment of it. For the rich

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man can only enjoy the leaſt part of what he has; he muſt always, whether he will or no, allow others to enjoy the greateſt; nay abating only his unreaſonable and hurtful gratifications, he can enjoy nothing, but what others in ſome way or other muſt profit by. He therefore, generally ſpeaking, is not deſerving of envy, nor yet to be reckoned a noxious member of ſociety. Eſteem and thanks are much rather due to him, for the benefits he communicates to others; for the proviſion and aſſiſtance they generally obtain from him in penury and want.

It follows thirdly, that a moderate income, well earned and properly employed, is of much greater value, as well to the man that has it as to the ſociety in which he lives, than the greateſt poſſeſſions, which are not ſo acquired, or ſo employed. What in the hands of ſloth, ignorance, folly, gluttony and luxury, fades, corrupts, vaniſhes, is poiſoned and killed; in the hands of wiſdom, virtue, induſtry and liberality, multiplies, improves, and refines! How much life and activity and joy does it not produce! Let not then the man of moderate fortune complain that he is not rich; let him not delay the good employment of what he has till he become ſo; but do at preſent all that his means allow him to do, and do it with prudence and perſeverance; and he will thus be as uſeful as if he were actually rich, and probably more ſo.

Laſtly it follows from what has been obſerved of the value of riches, that we are not to honour the rich

rich man, becauſe he is rich, but only as he has acquired and employs his riches in a laudable manner.

Let none therefore reverence the rich man merely becauſe he has inherited riches, till he render himſelf worthy of his fortune by a proper employment of it; and if he do not, let him be treated, not only in our private eſtimation, but in our outward behaviour, and in our public judgments, as inferior to an honeſt day-labourer, or any poor perſon, who is not poor by his vices; and let him perceive that ſociety is juſtly ſcandalized, at ſeeing a member of it receiving ſo much and diſtributing ſo little, requiring ſo much ſervice and performing hardly any, and puffing himſelf up with pretenſions, while he is indebted only to chance, or more juſtly ſpeaking to providence, for what he has, and which that providence would never have beſtowed upon him, if wealth were intrinſically important or honourable, or if it were always the token and the reward of merit.

Let none honour the rich man, who, with all the means and leiſure for cultivating his underſtanding and improving his heart and of procuring himſelf more elevated pleaſures, remains unimproved, ignorant, vicious, low-minded, and knows no other merit, no greater ſatisfaction than to count his money, and to heap treaſure upon treaſure.

Let none reverence the rich man who is rich only to himſelf, who keeps his riches for himſelf alone, is deaf to the voice of poverty and woe, and ſhuts his heart to compaſſion, his hand to charity.

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Let none reſpect the rich man who is proud of his riches, who reckons himſelf, merely on their account, better than his poorer brethren; and who proportions his conſideration and regard to others according to the degree of their greater or ſmaller income!

In ſhort, let no man honour riches in the hands of the fool, the unjuſt, the haughty, the epicure, the hard-hearted, and the miſanthropiſt! for riches can neither compenſate for folly, nor injuſtice, nor pride, nor hardneſs of heart, nor inhumanity; and though they may ſometimes conceal theſe vices and defects, it is only from the view of weak and ſilly perſons, who know not how to diſcriminate between ſemblance and reality, and ſuffer themſelves to be cheated by every impoſture.

But let every man, my pious hearers, let every man ſhew eſteem and reſpect for him, who, by his underſtanding, his induſtry, his diligence and his prudence, by a faithful and conſcientious employment of his gifts and faculties, is become rich!

Let every one honour the rich man who makes a good and generous uſe of his riches, who employs them in promoting and encouraging the induſtry of his fellow citizens, opens channels of uſeful commerce, encourages arts and ſciences, ſupports good inſtitutions, rewards beneficial diſcoveries and publiſhes them for the general advantage, and at the ſame time, though in the midſt of opulence, lives within the bounds of moderation and reaſon, and never loſes ſight of his ſuperior appointment!

Laſtly,

Laſtly, let every one honour the rich man who ſtrives to be rich in good works, in works of beneficence and mercy, who is rich more for others than for himſelf, who heartily gives and heartily helps; who cannot think himſelf rich but when he is giving and helping; who finds his joy and felicity in it; and in ſo doing, like his heavenly Father, the fountain of good, is never diſcouraged or weary! Yes, let every man revere him, as the friend and benefactor of his brethren, as the ſubſtitute of Jeſus, as the image of God!

SERMON VII.

The Value of Honour.

GOD, when we meditate on thee, on thy greatneſs and majeſty, and contraſt ourſelves with thee, the Eternal and Infinite, the Omniſcient, the Almighty, the Allgracious; we cannot humble ourſelves ſufficiently before thee: we moſt ſenſibly feel our imbecility and emptineſs; whatever among mortals is called honour, prerogative, grandeur, dignity, vaniſhes entirely from our ſight; we clearly diſcern how much humility and meekneſs become us, and how much pride and vanity are at variance with our nature and with our condition! And yet, o merciful God, thou haſt elevated us far above all the other creatures of this globe, endowed us with many talents and powers, made us capable of great things, given us the moſt cogent impulſes to extend our activity and to purſue after a higher, an ever progreſſive perfection; and it can never be contrary to thy deſign, if we eſteem and honour what is good and excellent that we find in one another, if we ſtrive in a proper manner to acquire the eſteem and approbation

probation of our brethren, if we ſtrive to excel each other in knowledge and virtue and general utility. Our nature and all its capacities and impulſes proceed from thee, and what proceeds from thee is right and good. Might we but adequately acknowledge the value of thy gifts, and conſtantly ſo uſe them as is comformable to thy will and our beſt intereſts! Teach us likewiſe to act thus in regard to the deſire of excelling, which thou haſt implanted in us. Keep us from all crooked and devious paths into which we are thereby liable to be miſled. Let it be in us a pure and fruitful ſource of good and generous actions: and grant that we may always prefer thy approbation far, far beyond all other, and endeavour after it far, far more zealouſly than after all other diſtinctions and poſſeſſions. To this end bleſs the reflections that we ſhall now direct to theſe objects, and cauſe them to have a powerful influence on all our future judgments and behaviour. For theſe bleſſings we pray thee, as votaries of thy ſon Jeſus; in whoſe name, and as far as we are able, in whoſe ſpirit, we further call upon thee, as our father which art in heaven, &c.

ROMANS xiii. 7.

Render therefore to all their dues—honour to whom honour.

EMULATION, my pious hearers, is natural to all men; and nothing but a high degree of inſenſibility, or of levity, or of depravity, can render us

us wholly indifferent to honour and ſhame. Indeed this ſentiment is not equally active and cogent in all. The degree of its force and activity in each perſon is determined by his natural character, his education, his habits of life, his company, his connections and frequently by peculiar adventitious circumſtances; but in none is it totally indolent, abſolutely inert. It muſt be confeſſed that this affection occaſions much miſchief among mankind — is the parent of many follies, many vices, much miſery. But it likewiſe occaſions not leſs, it occaſions even far more good, and is the fertile ſource of much wiſdom, many virtues, much happineſs. All depends upon the proper direction of it, upon the choice of its objects, and its being guided in the purſuit of them by reaſon and religion.

In order to this, my pious hearers, we ſhould form juſt conceptions of the value of honour, of the principles whereon it is deſirable; and on theſe ſeveral articles the generality of men fall into groſs miſtakes. Honour, no leſs than wealth, has an outward luſtre, a certain gloſs, that conceals its real and eſſential quality: and faſcinated by this luſtre, dazzled by this gloſs, few men think of examining and conſidering what may lie hid behind it. Hence ſuch different, ſuch oppoſite judgments are paſſed on the value of honour, as well as of wealth; hence the exceſſive eſteem and admiration of it on one hand, and the abſolute contempt of it on the other; hence the ardent, unabated purſuit of ſome

after whatever is called honour, and the careleſs or even ſcornful indifference of others towards it: hence in ſhort, that manifeſt variance, or that ſeeming contrariety between the maxims of the world and thoſe of morality and religion, — ſo many errors, prejudices, diſorders and extravagances, ariſing from a want of reflection and conſideration. Happy ſhall I think myſelf, my dear friends, if by my preſent attempt I can contribute anything towards abating theſe errors and miſtakes of the mind and heart; if I can guide you to any impartial and ſatisfactory reflections on this ſubject, ſo as to enable you to form a proper eſtimate of it!

My deſign is, to give you clearer and juſter ideas concerning the value of honour. Afford me then your cuſtomary ſerioufneſs and patient attention.

When the apoſtle in our text exhorts the chriſtians at Rome to "give to all their dues, honour to whom honour is due," he plainly ſhews, that honour is not in oppoſition to chriſtianity; that it has a certain value, is due to certain perſons, may be juſtly demanded by them, and that to teſtify it is a duty incumbent on us. On the ſame principle, he exhorts chriſtians on other occaſions, to prefer one another in honour; to follow after what is of good report, laudable and honourable; and admoniſhes the elders of congregations, who were not yet teachers, by a faithful diſcharge of their office to prepare their way to ſuperior ſtations. — Chriſtianity therefore neither abſolutely condemns honour nor

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the purſuit of it; but would teach its confeſſors in this article likewiſe prudence and moderation, to direct their ambition towards the moſt important and moſt excellent objects, and to look upon honour not as an end, but only as a means. — And if our ſaviour, in forbidding his diſciples to allow themſelves to be called maſter or rabbi, and ordering that the greateſt among them ſhall be as the leaſt, and the chief of them as the ſervant of all; if, I ſay, he thus appears utterly to diſcard all honour, every mark of diſtinction, and every token of reverence; yet the attentive reader of theſe precepts will eaſily perceive that his deſign in promulgating them was no other than to free his diſciples from the idle expectation of eminent dignities and conſpicuous ſtations in the kingdom of the Meſſiah; and to ſhew them that they were not to be guided by a party-ſpirit, not to ſet themſelves up for leaders of the people, but to direct all men to him, as the ſole head and lord of his congregation. The thing itſelf then is innocent and good, even according to the doctrine of chriſtianity; and all we have to do is to regard and to uſe it as is becoming the true nature and quality of it. In this deſign we will firſt examine and aſcertain the value of honour; and then draw from it a few rules for our conduct.

By honour, we are to underſtand all tokens of deference and reſpect ſhewn us by ſociety in preference to others, all outward precedence which it

grants or allows us, whether it conſiſt in dominion and authority, or in rank and titles, or in poſts and dignities, or in an exemption from certain burdens and reſtraints, or in other privileges of the like kind. Now in rightly adjuſting the worth of theſe things, we muſt in the firſt place diſcriminate between hereditary honours, and ſuch as are acquired.

Hereditary honours, privileges derived to us from our parents and anceſtors, and on account of which others ſhew us reſpect, have no ſolid intrinſic value on our account, and bear the name of honours in regard to us in but a very improper ſignification. This will immediately be perceived by any one that is not caught by mere outſide ſhow. For, in what manner has it been owing to me, that my forefathers, in ancient or modern times, by mental abilities, by virtues, by praiſe-worthy deeds, or by bodily ſtrength, have diſtinguiſhed themſelves from others; or that they were enabled probably by ſome fortunate accident, probably by ſome ſervice they performed, ſlight in itſelf, yet done in favourable circumſtances; probably even by baſe and low intrigues, by the arts of flattery, to procure the goodwill of ſome ſuperior, or to buy a title and precedence with money? What had I to do in all that; I, who then was not in being; I, who probably, had I been or were I now in their ſituation, would not, or could not do as my forefathers did? Have I therefore the ſmalleſt merit in it? Am I become the better and the more honourable, be-

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cauſe ſome of my anceſtors raiſed themſelves above their contemporaries as real heroes, or as ſavage warriors, or as highway robbers, or as court ſycophants; becauſe they acquired diſtinctions either by ſome truly good, or by ſome downright wicked act, or were raiſed above others by ſome fortunate event? Probably, it is true, probably I may have had the happineſs of a better education on this account than I ſhould have had in other circumſtances. But is a good education then a merit in me, for which I am to be honoured by others? Is it not merely a benefaction, for which I ſtand indebted to others, and which none can reckon meritorious in me, till I have ſhewn the worthy uſes I make of it?

Hereditary honours and privileges, or privileges of birth and deſcent, are therefore only ſo far valuable, as they incite me to render myſelf worthy of them, and to requite the community by good, generous and public-ſpirited actions; the more cautiouſly to avoid everything mean and diſgraceful; and to raiſe myſelf as much above others by my ſentiments and behaviour as I am their ſuperior in rank and titles. He on whom it has not this influence, he who does the reverſe, if he have otherwiſe a ſound underſtanding and is capable of reflection, muſt feel aſhamed as often as he thinks upon his outward diſtinctions; they muſt be burdenſome to him, like a load of debt which he has not diſcharged; he muſt, in thoſe moments of ſelf-inveſtigation and ſelf-abhor-

rence, wiſh that he had been born in an humbler ſtation! Reflect on this particularly, ye youths who bear the ſtyle of honourable! If ye be not honourably minded and honourably mannered, no wiſe, no intelligent man, will reverence you merely on account of your titles; and every baſe, every degrading action you commit, will load you with tenfold diſgrace!

Acquired, lawfully acquired honour on the other hand, my pious hearers, is true ſubſtantial honour, and has a great value, both in regard to the poſſeſſor and to the whole ſociety.

In regard to the poſſeſſor, it receives its value from the manner in which it is obtained, in which it is ſupported, and how it is uſed or applied. In all theſe reſpects it promotes his real ſpiritual perfection.

This is done principally by the legitimate acquiſition of honour; the acquiſition of that honour, which is not bought, not obtained by flattery, not extorted by arrogance, preſumption, or impudence; but is grounded on ſuperior talents, on good and public-ſpirited actions, on real benefits done to ſociety. He that acquires honour in this manner, muſt thereby become better and more excellent. For what great parts are generally requiſite for preſſing before the great crowd of mankind, for being diſtinguiſhed from them, for ſurpaſſing them, for excelling them in any inſtance in a remarkable, ſtriking, and univerſally approved manner! What does it not require to reach a certain mark which

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we have propoſed, frequently very diſtant, and often not clearly diſcernible; to be getting continually nearer it, and to purſue it with conſtancy till it be attained! How many impediments have we to get over, how many trips to avoid, and how many competitors to outrun! How difficult, how complicated, how prolix is frequently the affair itſelf through which this honour is to be acquired: I mean the art, ſcience, military ſervice, civil or mercantile concerns, the rural œconomy, wherein we ſeek to excel! And how much harder ſtill do all theſe things become by circumſtances not dependent on ourſelves, by the poverty wherein we may be born, by the little inſtruction we have probably received in our younger years, by the oppoſition all men have to encounter, by the jealouſies and envy we excite, by the unavoidable miſtakes we commit! What ſtruggles, what various exertions of our mental faculties does it not require, to force a paſſage through all theſe difficulties, to combat and conquer them all! But is not this the way that leads to greater excellence, to wiſdom, and to virtue?

No more can we worthily maintain our honour ſo acquired, without at the ſame time promoting our perfection. Would we ſecure the prize for which we contend from being raviſhed from us; we ſhould never ſtand idle — much leſs recede — ſhould be perpetually ſtretching forwards, always ſtriving to make farther advances in what is ami-

able and praiſe-worthy. Wiſe, good, public-ſpirited actions, which are not followed by ſimilar actions, merits which are not augmented by new ones, ſoon ſink into forgetfulneſs, ſoon become a burden to us, then render us leſs reſpectable, and at length contemptible. What does it not require for this reſpected man to preſerve the good opinion, the eſteem and the confidence of ſociety; if he would not have them repent the precedence they have granted him, the honour they have ſhewn him! What attention to all his actions, even the leaſt of them; what circumſpection and prudence in whatever he does and whatever he declines; what ſacrifices of his conveniences, his pleaſures and his profits; what practice of the virtues; what an active and buſy life; what indefatigable purſuit of ſuperior perfection!

In ſhort, we cannot poſſeſs and enjoy honour in a rational and worthy manner, without thereby becoming better, happier and more uſeful to mankind. What a mighty incitement to the faithful diſcharge of our duty, to the moſt unſhaken integrity, muſt it be to ſuch a one who has a proper ſenſe of its value and the obligations it lays him under! How much eaſier is it in general for men to act uprightly and juſtly, generouſly and nobly, in the light of an univerſal eſteem, by the ſplendor of renown, than when they have to act in obſcurity, without witneſſes, without ſpectators, without judges!

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Again, honour procures us acceſs to the wiſeſt and the beſt perſons; it furniſhes us with opportunities for conciliating their eſteem, their confidence, their friendſhip; and how much may we afterwards learn of them, how greatly fortify our mind, how warm our heart, and how much happineſs enjoy in their converſation!

By honour and eſteem we far more readily find help and encouragement in our greater and more arduous undertakings, and more ſurely accompliſh our deſigns, than when we are unhonoured and unknown. Mankind have already a good opinion of us; have great confidence in our underſtanding and our heart; think us more reſpectable on account of our privileges, or at leaſt forbear to make public oppoſition to us, and directly to throw obſtacles in our way. We may therefore undertake greater matters, operate farther and wider about us, have more influence on others, and thus perform and promote more good. Our opinions meet with greater approbation; our deſigns go more glibly on; are more willingly ſupported; and far more heads and hands unite in their execution. Oh what is there that a man, who ſtands in great and merited eſteem, poſſeſſed of eminent precedence, of high rank, filling an exalted ſtation, and is wiſe and virtuous withal, what may he not perform for the benefit of his brethren! What a benefactor to the preſent and to many future generations may he be! — And what a pure and god-

like pleaſure muſt he procure himſelf in ſuch a uſe of his honour! How eminently muſt he diſplay his fitneſs for ſtill higher dignities, for ſtill greater activity in a better world!

But if honour and pre-eminence, lawfully acquired, worthily maintained, and properly employed, have a certain value in regard of their poſſeſſor; they aſſuredly have as great, and even a ſtill greater, in reſpect of the whole ſociety. They promote its intereſt in various ways.

It is of advantage in general, to ſociety, when it contains perſons who may ſerve as an example to others, and indeed among all claſſes and orders of men; and this they are able the better to do, when they ſtand higher than others, when they are diſtinguiſhed from others by their outward privileges, when they are known and reſpected by every man within their field of action, when every eye is directed towards them, when whatever they ſay and do quickly comes to every man's knowledge. The judgment, the approbation, the teſtimony, the example of one who ſtands high in eſteem and deſerved reſpect, has indiſputably far more weight, far more influence and efficacy, than the judgment, the approbation, the teſtimony, the example of another, though equally wiſe and virtuous, who lives in obſcurity and is loſt in the crowd. Indeed if all men had ſound principles, and acted upon them, if they all were penetrated and actuated by the ſpirit of religion and chriſtianity,

anity, they would not be in need of this comparatively feeble ſupport. But ſince, in the preſent ſtate of things, that is not to be expected, it is of infinite ſervice to the world, that the light which enlightens reſpectable perſons, the ſplendour that ſurrounds them, the eſteem that is paid them by all, ſhould in ſome degree ſupply the place of thoſe principles, thoſe nobler motives.

Honour lawfully acquired and worthily maintained, is farther a powerful incentive to others to contend for honour by the ſame laudable means. All men cannot, perhaps only a few can, diſpenſe with theſe incitements to eminently good and great enterpriſes, at leaſt in the beginning. Firſt, muſt the prize, the crown that ſparkles at the end of their courſe, awaken them from their ſloth, ſtimulate them to commence the glorious career, and help them to ſurmount the primary obſtacles in it. By degrees theſe allurements give place to more refined, more generous views and motives. They find, that truth, virtue, integrity, public uſefulneſs, are in themſelves excellent and deſirable objects; they employ themſelves wholly in them, indefatigably purſue their onward progreſs, directly to the mark, without looking farther, or deſcrying a more exalted and grander object beyond it; do whatever is laudable and honourable, without thinking at all on praiſe and honour; do, from a hearty love to God and man, what they at firſt did from motives of cupidity and ambition: and all this they

they probably would not have done, would never have exerted their capacities and abilities, would never have exerted them to that degree; if they had not been rouzed and ſtimulated by the view of more honourable, more reſpectable perſons, or by the report of their deeds, and by the avidity to do like them or to go beyond them; if the firſt ſparks of this active life, this greater ſedulity, theſe nobler ſentiments, theſe ſtruggles for enlargement and activity which lay ſmouldering in their breaſts, had not been thus blown up into a flame. And, if this were not the caſe, how many noble powers would probably never have been ſet in motion, how many ſeeds of good actions would never have come to maturity, how many uſeful purſuits and actions would never have been undertaken!

Honour, lawfully acquired and worthily maintained, receives laſtly a great value in regard of the whole community, as by means of it many very important projects are brought to effect, which otherwiſe would not be done, or far ſeldomer, and not without the greateſt labour and perſeverance. Without the influence of honour, how could the contradictory opinions, and the oppoſite powers and views of the great multitude of mankind, be brought into uniſon, and made to tend to one and the ſame object; how would any patriotic and arduous undertaking be maturely weighed, wiſely planned, and reſolutely accompliſhed? Whoſe counſel would be hearkened to in times of perplexity or diſtreſs;

who

who could acquire the needful confidence in times of danger; who could, in ſuch circumſtances, inſpire the ignorant, the feeble, the timid, the narrow-minded, the greateſt part of ſociety, with courage and tractability, unleſs a man can explain to them the reaſons for what he does and what he expects, or can make them underſtood? In ſhort, how can the prince, the magiſtrate, the judge, the teacher, the father of a family, the chieftain, the inſpector, ſucceſsfully diſcharge the duties of his office or his calling, unleſs the honour he enjoys, the reſpect in which he is held, give a peculiar weight to whatever he ſays and does and commands and adviſes and requeſts?

It therefore cannot be denied, that the honour which is lawfully obtained and properly employed, has a ſolid and laſting value, both in a view to its poſſeſſor and to ſociety at large, inaſmuch as it furthers and promotes in various ways the perfection and happineſs of both. — Let me now conclude, with laying before you, my pious hearers, a few ſhort practical rules in reſpect to your notion of honour and your purſuit of it.

Firſt, learn to diſtinguiſh between proprietary and adſcititious, ſubſtantial and ſpurious honour; prize the former anſwerably to its worth, but never ſuffer yourſelves to be faſcinated by the latter. All titles, rank, diſtinctions, which we owe merely to our birth, to our anceſtry, or to our hereditary ſtation, is adſcititious, borrowed honour; it be-

ſpeaks

ſpeaks no merit, but is an obligation and ſtimulus to acquire merit, and thereby to acquire a juſt claim to thoſe privileges and diſtinctions.

All honour acquired by undue and baſe means, which is founded on artifice, on treachery, on the oppreſſion and circumvention of the ſimple, on extortion, or on mere impudence, or vile and iniquitous acts of any kind; all honour that is abuſed to the purpoſes of pride and arrogance, to acts of violence, to the ſubverſion or contraction of human and civil liberty, to the enforcing of unlawful ſchemes and machinations; all honour that is ſought in a licentious, diſſolute, profligate conduct, in pomp and luxury, in vice; is ſurreptitious honour — is real diſgrace.

Let no man therefore degrade himſelf by ſhewing to him who only ſhines by ſurreptitious honour, that reverence which is only due to the man of real merit, who has procured it to himſelf, or has rendered himſelf worthy of it! Let no man diſhonour himſelf ſo far as to foſter the pride of the wretch who is proud of ſpurious honour, or concede the leaſt deference to vice, though inveſted with the richeſt robe of dignity! But let every man be zealous to give honour to whom honour is due; let every man confeſs and reſpect and revere whatever he perceives of good and uſeful and honourable in his brethren, let their ſtation be what it may! This is the duty of the man, the duty of the ſubject, the duty of the chriſtian!

Secondly,

Secondly, let not your emulation degenerate into ambition. The former is allowable, is natural, is the germ of virtue, the other is a criminal, ignominious vice, a corrupt paſſion, and the death of all real virtue. When once a man makes honour the ultimate, the paramount object of his purſuit; when he reſolves at any rate to diſtinguiſh himſelf from others, to force himſelf above them, to gain reverence, authority and power, approbation and applauſe, let it coſt what it will: he immediately encounters the riſk of loſing the path to real honour, and of entangling himſelf in the labyrinth of artifice and falſhood — will be capable of every vice, of every wicked deed, even the loweſt and moſt diſgraceful actions, if by their means he can but further his deſigns. Beware of this tyrannical paſſion! It is a ſcourge to human ſociety, and always, ſoon or late, rewards its votaries with ſhame and miſery!

Thirdly, give your emulation the beſt, the nobleſt direction. Prefer the pre-eminences of mind and heart to all the pre-eminences of rank and ſtation; wiſdom and virtue to all titles and honours; the ſilent acts of humanity and beneficence to all noiſy but leſs uſeful deeds!

Strive not ſo much for the eſteem of the multitude, as for that of the wiſeſt and beſt of them. Let the approbation of one wiſe, one virtuous, one real chriſtian, be of more value to you than the applauſe

applauſe of thouſands, whoſe judgment depends on accident and caprice!

Go ſtill farther; refine and exalt your emulation yet more. Seek not honour from men, but aim at the honour which only God can give. The approbation of the Omniſcient and Omnipreſent, of him who ſeeth in ſecret, ſeeth all, — the good as well as the evil, and the evil equally with the good, the intention as well as the performance, the will as well as the deed, the motive as well as the effect. — To gain his approbation, to become continually more capable and more deſerving of it, be that, be that the ultimate object of your ambition?

Fourthly, ſtrive not ſo much for honour, as for that which conduces to honour, that which is truly honourable; not for praiſe, but for what is praiſeworthy; not for fame, but for that which is worthy of good report; not for approbation and applauſe, but for what merits approbation and applauſe. From him who anxiouſly ſeeks honour, from him it commonly flies. He who does that which is honourable, and does it in honeſt ſimplicity of heart, becauſe it is juſt and proper, will, for the moſt part, find honour and approbation, even though he did not ſeek it. Reſtleſs, anxious ambition, a nice and delicate adaptation of every word, every ſtep, every action to the ſevereſt rules of honour, cannot by any means conſiſt with the character

character of a truly great and noble ſoul, with a truly chriſtian-minded chriſtian. The noble ſoul, the great man, the real chriſtian, are ſo employed in effectual practice, in better and more perfect exerciſe of what is fair and great and chriſtian — are ever ſeeing before them ſo many and ſtill greater and weightier things to do — are ſo pre-occupied with truth and virtue and the public benefit, ſo penetrated with the love of God and of their brethren, that they forget themſelves, and find ſufficient motive and reward in the very acts of juſtice and humanity, and may prize the honour of men not as their end and aim, but at moſt as the inſtrument and means. This, my dear friends, is true greatneſs, true nobleneſs of mind, the foundation and capacity for everlaſting honour!

Fifthly, purſue the onward path of duty and honour, endeavour to make the beſt, the moſt beneficial uſe of your gifts and faculties, and though ſtill no outward diſtinctions ſhould fall to your ſhare, and your merits ſhould be unacknowledged by ſociety: oh, let not that deceive you; confidently purſue the path you have begun; the end of it will bring you to greater perfection and felicity. Complain not of injuſtice and ingratitude, if unfavourable and adverſe circumſtances withhold from you the honour you have deſerved. It cannot conſtantly be conferred according to deſert. Its judges, its diſtributers, are men, fallible, miſtaking, paſſionate men! Numbers are likewiſe frequently

frequently running at the ſame mark with you, come to the full as near, and yet only one can gain the prize. But let this ſerve you as a caution, not to make honour your ultimate aim, or you may eaſily miſs of it, without any fault of your own. Only the approbation of our conſcience, the approbation of God, is what no man can deprive us of without our fault. For theſe let us ſtrive, and we ſhall never labour in vain, nor fail in our attempt.

Laſtly, my pious hearers, here likewiſe be guided as chriſtians by the example of Chriſt; let him be your model. He ſought not honour from men; he cared leaſt for that which moſt glitters and ſparkles in their eyes; never boaſted of his pre-eminence; he ſuffered neither praiſe nor blame to divert him from the path of righteouſneſs and truth: but all that was truly honourable and venerable, that did he, and did it without intermiſſion. All his diſcourſes, all his actions, were conſiſtent with his dignity; all tended to the promotion of the greateſt poſſible human felicity. He neither ſaid nor did anything that tended to leſſen his influence and thereby enervate his doctrine and fruſtrate his benevolent labours. The good pleaſure of his heavenly father he prized above all things, and ſtrove with unabated ardour for the honour of being the helper, the ſaviour, the deliverer of many, of all mankind. And by that road he arrived at ſovereign glory, was exalted above all,

all, and obtained a dignity that is above every dignity; that at his name every knee ſhould bow, and all mankind acknowledge and obey him as their Lord. Him, my deareſt friends, him let us follow, become conſtantly more aſſimilated with him in ſentiments and actions. The way which he has trod before us is the way that leads to the higheſt pinacle of honour.

SERMON VIII.

The Value of Senſual Pleaſure.

GOD, moſt kind, moſt merciful father, willingly doſt thou grant us, thy children, pleaſure; pleaſure of various kinds; ſenſual, ſpiritual, domeſtic, ſocial pleaſures, — pleaſures of the preſent and of the future life! Thou thyſelf haſt made us all ſuſceptible of pleaſure, taught us to purſue and to obtain it, and haſt opened to us various and exuberant ſources of it within us and without us. Fain wouldſt thou avert from us all pain, all ſuffering, all diſpleaſure, — fain wouldſt thou let our whole life be one uninterrupted ſeries of agreeable ſenſations, if it might be compatible with our nature and with our conduct. Praiſed be thy fatherly kindneſs, o God of our lives, for having ſo richly and ſo unremittedly provided for our pleaſure and for our happineſs! — Praiſed be thy wiſe parental tenderneſs even then, when it abſolutely forbids us noxious pleaſures, when it bids us enjoy even innocent pleaſures with moderation, when it requires

of us abſtinence and renunciations! For thus alſo thou promoteſt our welfare, preſerveſt us from numberleſs pains and evils, and intendeſt to lead us to ſuperior joys and felicities. Yes, thou art always the father — the moſt condeſcending, beneficent father, in all that thou diſpoſeſt and doſt, in what thou commandeſt us and in what thou forbiddeſt! We rejoice therefore in thy preſence, and implore thee that this ſentiment may conſtantly live and govern in our ſouls, refine and dignify our pleaſures, preſerve us from every abuſe of them, and be the vital principle of our whole deportment! Imprint deeply in our hearts this conſolatory, this pious ſentiment; teach us to recognize and feel thee and thy goodneſs in all things and at all times; let all lead us to thee, and every pleaſure that thou concedeſt to us awaken us to the love of thee and to a truly cheerful obedience to thy commands. Bleſs likewiſe in this reſpect the conſiderations in which we are now to be employed. Give us to diſcern the truth, and ſo to follow its dictates as never to abuſe them to ſin. Theſe and all other our petitions we conclude, as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, in his name and words, referring the iſſue of all our deſires and views ultimately to the direction of thy ſupreme controul, eternal, everlaſting king, enſhrined in glory that cannot be approached, inveſted with wiſdom and power which no arm can reſiſt, no tongue expreſs, no thought conceive. — Our father, &c.

I TIM. iv. 4.

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving.

HAVING in the two preceding diſcourſes ſpoken of the value of riches and of the value of honour, I ſhall to-day addreſs to you, my devout audience, ſome conſiderations on the value of pleaſure; and particularly of what is called ſenſual pleaſure. Erroneouſly and partially as mankind have been and ſtill are apt to judge of the value of riches and of honour, no leſs erroneouſly and partially have they eſtimated the value of ſenſual pleaſure. But too frequently has it been abſolutely condemned as unworthy of rational and immortal beings, of chriſtians called to a ſuperior virtue; and to ſanction this condemnation of it appeals have been made to religion and chriſtianity. And how lamentably have both religion and chriſtianity been by this means diſcredited in the minds of many! What numbers have been thus deterred from the love and practice of them! How often have theſe beſt friends and comforters of man been preſented to us under a gloomy and joyleſs aſpect! But how greatly have religion and chriſtianity been thus miſrepreſented and injured! What a criminal abuſe of their moſt ſacred names! How far are they from interdicting us innocent pleaſures, harmleſs ſatisfactions of whatever

ever kind, and from rendering the draught of life more bitter and unpleaſant than it ſhould be by the conſtitutions and regulations which God has eſtabliſhed in nature: how far, I ſay, are they from this; they, who have nothing in view but to lighten the load of life, to inſpire us with a firm and lively courage, and to make us know and feel the goodneſs of our heavenly Father, in all that ſurrounds and befalls us; and to render us, not only in the future, but likewiſe in the preſent world, as happy as it is poſſible for us to be!

No, as religion and chriſtianity neither prohibit us from ſtriving to acquire riches by lawful means, nor from endeavouring after true honour by the way of wiſdom and virtue; ſo neither do they forbid us to yield our ſenſitive organs to the agreeable impreſſions made upon them by external objects, and therefore to enjoy ſenſual pleaſure. Indeed they admoniſh us not to injure ourſelves and others by their improper uſe, not to be intemperate in their enjoyment, and not to indulge an overweening fondneſs for them. But even in ſo doing they provide for our pleaſure, for its higher reliſh, for its longer duration, for its compatibility with the pleaſures of the mind and heart, of which we are as ſuſceptible as of the former, and which are ſtill more deſirable. We muſt only, according to their dictates, ſo uſe the world, and the good things thereof, as not abuſing them. We muſt only take heed that while God never leaves himſelf without a wit-

neſs in us that he ſends us ſo much good from heaven, and fills our hearts with food and gladneſs, that we do not ſuffer it to draw us off from him, but to lead and bring us nearer to him. We may enjoy, without ſcruple, all that God has made, and whatever he has offered to our enjoyment by his conſtitution of the univerſe; but enjoy all with prayer and thankſgiving from a ſenſibility to the kindneſs of our ſupreme benefactor, and thus to ſanctify it to our uſe. This the apoſtle declares in the words of our text. "Every creature of God," ſays he, every thing that God has created, every pleaſure of which he has made us capable, "is good and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving;" we may enjoy them all without ſin, if only at the ſame time we do not forget the heavenly donor, and withdraw our affections from him. Admitting theſe premiſes as undeniable, we will now proceed to inveſtigate the matter itſelf more cloſely, and ſo endeavour to get a complete conception of it. In this deſign we ſhall firſt make a few obſervations on pleaſure in general, and on the various kinds of it; then ſtate the value of ſenſual pleaſure in particular; and laſtly lay down ſome rules for our conduct in relation to it.

Every pleaſure, even ſenſual pleaſure, has in itſelf, a peculiar value. In this reſpect it eſſentially differs from riches and honour. They receive their whole value from the uſe we make of them, from the effects they produce, from the good that is wrought

wrought by them. But pleaſure is in itſelf, without regard to effects and conſequences, ſomething agreeable, ſomething good; an agreeable ſenſation, an agreeable exertion of our abilities, an agreeable ſentiment of our exiſtence and of our preſent condition.

It muſt however be confeſſed, that every pleaſure is not deſirable in like manner; but neither is every real good abſolutely ſo, and in the ſame degree. The poſſeſſion of one good often militates with the poſſeſſion of another; the enjoyment of one pleaſure may often not conſiſt with the enjoyment of another. One pleaſure is always purer, nobler, greater than another: one pleaſure even remains a pleaſure in its conſequences; another ſoon ceaſes to be a pleaſure, and changes into pain or diſguſt. There are pleaſures which are bought much too dear, and do not repay the trouble that we have beſtowed upon them, though they do not therefore ceaſe to be pleaſures: there are others which are worth every toil, every preparative, every exertion, and always perform more than they promiſe. We ſhould therefore indeed chuſe from among our pleaſures, ſince they cannot all be enjoyed at once, may not all be enjoyed at any time; ſince ſome muſt be neglected and ſlighted, that we may be capable and partakers of others. Every pleaſure is good, is deſirable; but each in its proper time, in its due degree, according to its kind. Even the meaneſt, the loweſt ſpecies of them have the preference, at certain times and

in certain places, to the nobleſt and the moſt refined. Thus we may, we ſhould not unfrequently prefer the ſatisfying of an urgent animal want, or the reſt and inaction neceſſary to the recreation of our enfeebled body, to the pureſt tranſports of devotion. In general they are all either dignified or debaſed, either diminiſhed or increaſed, according to the ſtate of mind in which they are enjoyed, the views we have in them and the uſe we make of them.

Farther: all even what is called ſenſual pleaſure, is properly intellectual pleaſure: that is, our mind has the ſenſe, the conſciouſneſs of the agreeable alterations extrinſecally produced in the body, or in the viſible world, as well as the agreeable ideas which independent on all externals, it raiſes and proſecutes in itſelf by its own inherent energies. Satisfaction and diſſatisfaction, pleaſure and diſpleaſure are no more than different circumſtances of our mind, different modes of feeling its exiſtence and its relations to other objects, whether the principle and the occaſions of them be within it or without it.

We diſtinguiſh them only in reference to the means whereby theſe alterations and ideas ariſe in us; or in regard to the ſources whence we derive theſe agreeable ſenſations.

Whether it be our organs of ſenſe that preſent them to us; whether beautiful images, that enter the mind by the eyes, melodious ſounds by the ear, fragrant odours by the noſtrils, gently poignant impreſſions

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by the palate and tongue, or agreeable thrilling emotions and ſenſations by ſenſibility; they are all called ſenſual pleaſures, though it is always our mind that has and enjoys them. They may even ſometimes in a purer, higher, nay, in the proper ſignification of the term become ſpiritual; when, we are led by them to the contemplation and ſentiment of the true, the beautiful, the good in nature, and to the ſtill more elevated contemplation and adoration of their great author and his goodneſs; or in general when we reflect on them, compare them together and with former ſentiments and ideas, draw inferences from them, and aſcend from particulars and individuals to generals and univerſals, and at length, as far as our comprehenſion reaches, ſurvey the whole, and thus call forth and exerciſe all our mental faculties, and this without laborious effort and with beneficial effects.

And this it is then wherein ſpiritual pleaſures in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the term, and in contradiſtinction to ſuch as are called ſenſual, conſiſt. We term them ſpiritual, inaſmuch as they do not ariſe from preſent impreſſions on our organs of ſenſe, but chiefly or entirely by the perculiar operation of our mind, and are a reſult of its reflections, its conſiderations and reſearches — relate more to inviſible than to viſible things, and are grounded on the knowledge and contemplation of truth, on the ſenſations of moral beauty and harmony, on the conſcious ſenſe of our own, inward, ever-increaſing perfection,

perfection, on adoration of God, on joy in him and exhilarating prospects in futurity.

These, the more spiritual, or entirely spiritual pleasures, have undoubtedly the greatest value of all. They are in their own nature inexhaustible. No man can ever enjoy all the pleasures of this kind of which he is capable; and never can he so completely enjoy them as that he might not still more completely enjoy them. One pleasure here is continually springing out of another; and even that which we have the most frequently enjoyed loses nothing of its value thereby, never becomes insipid, is continually acquiring new charms, ever fresh delights, ever shews itself on new sides and in new combinations. — The materials of these pleasures are as immense as the kingdom of truth, as unbounded as the universe, as infinite as divine perfection. — — These pleasures are for the same reasons far more durable than all others. They vanish not with the light of the day, disappear not with the outward aspect of things, corrupt not with our bodies in the grave. They remain with us as long as we remain. They abide by us under all the changes and revolutions, however great, of our present and future condition. They supply the want of the whole visible world, in the darkness of the night and the absence of all society, in the loneliness of the grave. — — — On this very account are they likewise pleasures which bring us nearest to the end for which we were created. They transplant us from the class of merely

merely animal, into that of ſpiritual beings. They are in immediate connexion with the pleaſures we expect in a better life, render us fitter for the enjoyment of them, and thoſe become the foundation of theſe and theſe a continuance of thoſe.

But certain as all this is, my pious hearers, ſo certain is it likewiſe, that ſenſual pleaſures have nevertheleſs their real value, that we are not by any means to deſpiſe and reject them, that we ſhould much rather prize, ſeek, enjoy them. — And wherein then peculiarly conſiſts the value of ſenſual pleaſure?

That it conſiſts in an agreeable ſenſation, in a pleaſant mode of exiſtence, and thereby, like every other pleaſure, has an intrinſic value, inſeparable from the enjoyment of it, is what we have already remarked, and is not capable of any farther definition, as a matter entirely belonging to the province of ſentiment and experience. But when it is innocent and legitimate, it receives a ſtill greater value by the good conſequences it produces, by its effects on our whole ſtate and condition.

The moderate and genial enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſure ſupports our life, and promotes our health. By giving a ſtronger ſtimulus to the ſolids, and a quicker circulation to the fluids of our body; by the number and diverſity of the movements it occaſions, by the ceſſation of the toilſome and fatiguing exertion of particular veſſels and limbs either neceſſary to ſedate reflection, or to hard mechanical labour;

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by the relaxation of muſcles and fibres too ſtrongly agitated, and the moderated motion of thoſe that have lain too long inactive; by the freer inhaling and exhaling of the outward air, by the concomitant relief from preſſing cares, by the view of brighter objects, the excitation and enjoyment of more agreeable ſenſations: by all theſe means the ſlighter diſorders of the body are removed, their farther progreſs ſtopped, the regularity and equipoiſe of its various parts and their movements are reſtored, and new life and new powers infuſed into the whole frame. And this is frequently better effected by walking abroad, recreating journies, company, converſation, diverſions, dancing, convivial entertainments and the like, than by merely mental pleaſures; under which our bodies would ſink, at leaſt in their preſent ſtate, if they were not relieved by ſuch alternate changes, as much as under the oppreſſion of too full a meal.

But if our bodies ſtand in need of refreſhment and recreation, our mind no leſs requires and finds them in the innocent and moderate enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſure. Its attention is thereby directed to other matters leſs grave and auſtere; its faculties are as it were unbent, act more freely; are no longer confined to the proſecution of one particular purpoſe; employ themſelves on new ſubjects, on lighter ſucceſſions of ideas and ſentiments, or paſs more rapidly from one to another, without dwelling on any to fatigue; and thus our mind acquires new life, new vigour, new aptitude, new energies whenever

whenever duty and vocation, and the thirſt after higher excellence ſummon it to new exertions, and to purſue them with ſatisfaction and with ſucceſs.

Innocent ſenſual pleaſure tends likewiſe to the more cloſe aſſociation of mankind and to the promotion of ſocial life. Social pleaſure draws all within the ſphere of its operation to it; brings all the parts of it nearer together. All mutually give and take, receive and enjoy; every one contributes more or leſs to the pleaſure of the reſt; and this muſt awaken in them a ſenſe of their mutual dependence, their mutual wants, and thereby make them more valuable and more dear to each other.

Innocent ſenſual pleaſure and the ſocial enjoyment of it, likewiſe mitigates all rigour and ſeverity in the judgments and manners of men; cauſes them to perceive more goodneſs, more pleaſant and amiable qualities in each other; gives even virtue a brighter aſpect, piety a more cheerful mien, thus gains more proſelytes to both, and procures them both a larger and more unimpeded operation.

Innocent ſenſual pleaſure expands the heart with benevolence towards all mankind, cauſes us to take greater intereſt in every thing about us, makes us more ſenſible to the wants of others, and may frequently excite us to very beneficial and generous actions. Never is the man that is worthy of that name, that has the ſentiments of humanity within him, more ready to help his brethren, and to do them good

good than when he feels his own good fortune and proſperity, and is pleaſed and cheerful in the enjoyment of it.

Innocent ſenſual pleaſure is properly earnt by honeſt perſevering induſtry in our calling, and is, at the ſame time, the due reward of it: a reward of which perſons even in the loweſt ſtations of life are capable and probably are moſt in want of; a reward that ſupports them by the expectation of it in their moſt laborious toils, and alleviates to them the moſt diſagreeable and moſt troubleſome occupations.

And how adapted is the enjoyment of innocent ſenſual pleaſure to raiſe the heart of the rational man, the true chriſtian, to God, the author and giver of pleaſure; to pervade him entirely with the ſentiment of his goodneſs; to inſpire him with inward love and gratitude to his beneficent creator and father; to awaken in him a pure, exalted, cheerful piety; to allow him to hope for more and larger portions of the divine bounty; and open to him the brighteſt proſpects of ſuperior, nobler kinds of pleaſure in a more perfect ſtate.

All theſe conſequences and effects, which attend on innocent and temperate ſenſual pleaſure, muſt certainly give it a manifold real value; and we ſhould be ignorant both of man and his wants, were we to refuſe it him altogether, or impute it to him as a ſin, that inaſmuch as he is a ſenſual being he ſhould

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enjoy ſenſual pleaſure. No, "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving."

Permit me now, my pious hearers, to lay down a few rules which may be of ſervice to you in the uſe and enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſure, and guard you from miſtakes.

Think not, that becauſe I pronounce all pleaſure to be real pleaſure, and do not, as uſual, for the moſt part condemn it, that you are therefore to purſue every pleaſure without ſcruple, and enjoy it at all times, and in every way at will. All pleaſures are really and actually ſo; they produce in us agreeable ſenſations. But all pleaſures are not lawful; all are not harmleſs; all are not dignified; all may not be enjoyed at all times, in all circumſtances, in the ſame proportion. The generality of ſenſual pleaſures are deceitful; that is, they promiſe more than they perform; they but ſeldom come up to our expectations; they excite agreeable ſenſations within us, but not ſuch agreeable, not ſuch delightful ſenſations, as we perhaps concluded they would; they commonly are far leſs durable than we expected. — Every, even the moſt innocent pleaſure, may change into pain, and does actually change into pain, by too frequent, too long, too continued enjoyment; if we bring it on by compulſion, and endeavour to prolong its continuance by force, when it is not the ſimple exigence of nature, but an artificial requiſite of our heated

heated imagination. — Several kinds of pleaſure are abſolutely interdicted; as all thoſe that are deſtructive to the body or to the mind; all that are injurious to our neighbour, in his health, his honour, his property, his lawful amuſements, or in his circumſtances; all that render us unfit or indiſpoſed for the ſocial duties and ſervices we are bound to perform. — Others are lawful, but only as they are enjoyed at proper ſeaſons, in due degree, and are not diſqualifying or detrimental to the reliſh of more refined and exalted pleaſures.

Be therefore — this is my ſecond rule — be prudent, careful, conſcientious in the choice of your pleaſures. Do not imagine the firſt that ſolicits you to be the beſt. This is to act like children, who are yet defective in that which generally diſtinguiſhes man from the inferior animals, I mean judgment, and who yet, like the brutes, act more from inſtinct than from conſideration and reflection. Men ſhould diſtinguiſh themſelves from children in the choice of their pleaſures. Suffer no pleaſure, which you yourſelf do not approve, to obtrude itſelf upon you, to over-perſuade you, or carry you away; or which, at the time, and in the preſent temper of your mind, you had rather change for another, perhaps ſome nobler pleaſure. Examine the pleaſure that preſents itſelf to you, by the rules of wiſdom, of prudence, of religion and of chriſtianity; by your preſent wants and circumſtances. Aſk yourſelf: By this pleaſure ſhall I do no wrong

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to any one, hurt none, neglect no neceſſary, indiſpenſable duty to my parents, my children, my family, my fellow-ſubjects, my fellow-creatures? Will not my worldly affairs be injured by it? Will it be prejudicial or ſerviceable to my health? Will it wound my peace of mind or promote it? Will it add to the temptations and allurements of ſin and vice, or give me encouragement and incentives to virtue? Will it tend to fit or to unfit me for the diſcharge of my obligations, to make me more indolent or more alert? Will it lead me off from God: or, by a rational and diſcreet enjoyment of his bounty, attach me cloſer to him? Will it deprive me of my taſte for ſerious occupations, for ſublimer pleaſures, of all reliſh for divine worſhip, for exerciſes of devotion, or inſpire me with freſh inclinations and ability for them? Am I ſure that it will never cauſe me remorſe and pain; that I ſhall always recollect it with ſatisfaction and with thankfulneſs to God who vouchſafed it to me? Shall I not lay a ſtumbling-block in the way of any one, or needleſsly offend him by the indulgence of this gratification? Shall I not probably thereby induce others of the ſame ſtation with myſelf, but not in ſuch good circumſtances, to follow my example, and ſo to prejudice themſelves and others? — And am I, in ſhort, actually in want of this pleaſure? have I firſt deſerved it by any good and uſeful actions, by a faithful and diligent obſervance of my duty? Have I really ſo conſumed my

ſtrength by labouring in my vocation, or by any other laudable means, that I muſt provide for its recreation? For, as it is ſaid, He that will not work, neither ſhould he eat; it may be full as truly ſaid, he who has not worked, is not authoriſed to take any pleaſure, neither can he completely enjoy it. — Whoever frequently and ſeriouſly makes theſe reflections, will certainly indulge himſelf in no pleaſure that is unlawful, or that may be manifeſtly injurious to himſelf or others, will ſeldom err in the choice of his pleaſures, and never tranſgreſs the bounds of moderation; and to him it will conſtantly be what it was intended to be in the gracious deſigns of our creator — not the buſineſs, not the main concern, not the ultimate object — but the relaxation, recreation, refreſhment, encouragement and incentive to duty, ſubſerviency to ſuperior perfection.

A third rule, that may aſſiſt us in the choice of our pleaſure, is this: always prefer thoſe pleaſures and diverſions which are at the ſame time profitable, to ſuch as are ſimply pleaſures and diverſions, or the advantage whereof is very remote and almoſt imperceptible. In this view, the more mental pleaſures have a manifeſt preference to the more ſenſual or the barely ſenſual. When I gratify my palate by ſavory meats, or pleaſe it by generous and racy wine; when I flatter my olfactory nerves by aromatic and delicious odours; when I delight myſelf in the ſenſations of a gentle warmth, a refreſhing

freſhing breeze, or other kindly impreſſions on the organs of feeling; when I beguile the languid intervals of ſeverer ſtudies by honeſt diverſion; when I totally unbend, and yield alternately to the genial impreſſions of outward things: all this is real pleaſure; but it is merely pleaſure, nothing but pleaſure, that is ſometimes advantageous in its conſequences, but never abſtractedly. As often on the other hand, as I engage in ſerious or lively, inſtructive or facetious converſation, or frequent polite and ſenſible company, as often as I contemplate the beauties of nature, or the harmony of ſounds, or the works of art, with earneſtneſs and ſentiment; as often as I adminiſter wholeſome food to my mind, my ſagacity and my ſenſibility, by reading or hearing the performances of genius; as often as I employ myſelf in reflection or in exerciſes of devotion, or in works of beneficence: ſo often I enjoy pleaſure, actual pleaſure, and yet not merely pleaſure, but, at the ſame time, during the enjoyment, I promote a uſeful exerciſe of my mental powers, of my taſte, my ſenſibility, my talents and ingenuity, and in ſo doing immediately forward my perfection and happineſs. Therefore continue no labour to abſolute fatigue, till you feel quite weakened and exhauſted, and require a total relaxation, and ſo force yourſelf to ſeek mere pleaſure, or rather a not diſagreeable inactivity and repoſe, in attending to your health or your life; whenever the choice of your pleaſures depends on

yourſelf, and you may enjoy one as well as another without detriment, prefer that which by a moderate employment affords you recreation and exerciſe at once, to that which juſt relieves you from wearineſs, is juſt agreeable, or inſpires you with new ſtrength and energy only in its conſequences.

Fourthly, my pious hearers, let no ſenſual pleaſure grow into a paſſion, if you would not run the hazard of loſing your liberty, and of falling into the moſt lamentable bondage. He that indulges himſelf as frequently in ſenſual pleaſure as he has the means and opportunities for it, will ſoon find that he cannot forego it without uneaſineſs and reluctance: and he who cannot deprive himſelf of it without thinking himſelf unhappy, will ſoon find it become a paſſion; that is, he will no longer be able to withſtand the calls and allurements of it — will prefer it to all other kinds of pleaſure, ſacrifice them all to that one, and think himſelf happy only while in the enjoyment of it. And when matters are come to this paſs, how can the man ſtill preſerve his freedom? How will he be able to do that which reaſon and conſcience in all events enjoin him as the fitteſt and beſt? How often will he neglect the moſt urgent affairs and violate the moſt ſacred obligations, for running after this pleaſure which is everything to him! How often will the bare want of it, or the impoſſibility of enjoying it, render him indiſpoſed, unqualified, too languid for

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any other exertion of his faculties, for any ſerious buſineſs, for any uſeful occupation! — And how can a man in this ſituation be happy? Nay, the oftener he muſt deny himſelf the pleaſure he ſo paſſionately purſues (and neither his own nature, nor the nature of other things and other men, will allow him ſo frequently to enjoy it as he would wiſh) the oftener therefore he muſt deny himſelf to it, ſo much the oftener muſt he more or leſs be miſerable. Would you avoid this thraldom and this miſery, my pious hearers; ſuffer not the propenſity to ſenſual pleaſure to get the maſtery over you; allow it not to become ſo violent as that you cannot withſtand it. To this end, accuſtom yourſelves to abſtinence from this kind of pleaſures. Enjoy them not ſo frequently as circumſtances and time permit; not ſo frequently as you have opportunities and inclination for them. Break off from them at times, on purpoſe, that you may learn to be deprived of them without anxiety or vexation; merely that you may maintain the command over yourſelf, and the rights of your reaſon and liberty; merely that you may not become the ſlaves of ſuch things, as you probably muſt, one time or other, relinquiſh whether you will or no, and the privation of which would render you unhappy, if you had not previouſly accuſtomed yourſelf to it. Hard as the obſervance of this rule may appear, my pious hearers, it is abſolutely neceſſary

for every man who would be wiſe and virtuous, and capable of laſting peace and a ſolid felicity.

Laſtly, for the enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſures, however innocent they may be, neglect not, my dear friends, the loftier and purer pleaſures of the mind. Let them not render you unfit for theſe. Let theſe ever have the precedence over them. They are deceitful, tranſient, of ſhort duration; theſe are altogether what they ſeem; perform all that they promiſe, and even more; are incorruptible and eternal. The former we can only enjoy ſo long as we have theſe ſenſitive organs; with the death of our body they fall totally away. The latter abide with us after we have paſt the grave and gate of death; we can injoy them as long as our ſpirit exiſts and lives and acts. The knowledge of truth will rejoice us forever, yield us inexhauſtible materials for reflection and pleaſure, and raiſe us continually to higher knowledge. Good virtuous ſentiments, actions, habitudes, will never ceaſe to bleſs us with the delightful conſciouſneſs of perfection and intrinſic worth. Communion with God will be to us an inexhauſtible ſource of the moſt elevated pleaſure and delight. But theſe ſpiritual pleaſures can only then be ſo, after we have known and loved and ſought and enjoyed them here, and preferred them to every other kind of pleaſure. He that has confined himſelf here to merely ſenſual pleaſures, muſt neceſſarily be miſerable in the future ſtate. He brings with him

him the eager appetite for pleaſure, and all the means of gratifying it are gone. Can you repreſent to yourſelves a ſtate of greater torment than this?

Beware, my dear friends, of this; refine and exalt your taſte, frequently reflect on your future appointment; ſay often to yourſelves: No, I am not wholly duſt, not totally ſubject to corruption; I am not merely an animal man. There is a ſpirit within me, a rational, immortal ſpirit, capable of greater perfection, of a higher felicity; a ſpirit, whoſe life and nutriment conſiſts not in meat and drink, not in ſenſual indulgences, but in knowledge and virtue, and love towards God and man; a ſpirit, whoſe future portion depends on my preſent behaviour, whoſe future pleaſures will be determined by thoſe which I at preſent moſt ſeek, moſt prize, moſt love! Mere ſenſual pleaſures cannot ſatisfy it; they follow it not into its higher ſtate; it cannot tranſport them with it into a better world. No, I will even now endeavour to ſecure to myſelf thoſe nobler pleaſures, thoſe purer joys, to which I am invited as a man and a chriſtian; will at preſent exerciſe myſelf in every thing that can qualify me to hope and give me the capacity for them! Then let all ſenſual earthly pleaſures be ever ſo ſhort, ever ſo imperfect, ever ſo tranſient, ever ſo quickly to be raviſhed from me, I ſtill know, that quite other ſatisfactions await me, celeſtial, divine, eternal, which will immenſely compenſate the loſs of them.

SERMON IX.

The Value of Intellectual Pleaſures.

GOD, father of all mankind, of all ſpirits, — eternal ſource of all that is and lives and thinks! Even us thou haſt raiſed to the rank of thinking, intelligent, ſpiritual beings, to the rank of thy children, of thy eminently favoured children, who know thee as their father, and can have communion with thee! If thou have made us like to the inhabitants of the duſt and connected us with an earthly body, yet is there within us a ſpiritual life, a ſpiritual energy which lifts us far above duſt and clay, and tells us that we are formed after thy image, that we are thy offspring! Yes, we feel within ourſelves thy energy divine; which tells the heart, thou meaneſt, thou madeſt us to behold and love what thou beholdeſt and loveſt, the general orb of life and being; to be great like thee, beneficent and active. And how much has thy fatherly goodneſs provided for the ſuſtenance, the gratification, the ever increaſing perfection of our mind!

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With what abilities and capacities furniſhed it! What ſources of the pureſt, moſt exalted pleaſure opened to it! And how blithe, how happy might we already be in this our infant ſtate, if we knew how to prize and to employ our advantages aright! Oh that we were never unmindful of our celeſtial extraction, our near connection with thee, our cloſe affinity with thy ſon Jeſus and our more glorious appointment hereafter, — never thought and acted as merely ſenſual creatures, but continually as intelligent, ſpiritual, immortal men! Teach us then thyſelf to perceive and feel our dignity, to prefer before all things that which connects us with ſuperior intelligences, and with thee, the Mind Supreme, ever better and better to uſe and to exerciſe our nobler capacities and powers, and thus ever to render ourſelves more worthy of being called thy children and brethren of thy ſon Jeſus, who is highly exalted over all! — Let the knowledge of truth, the love and practice of virtue, benevolence and beneficence, the purſuit of endleſs perfection, and the ſublime prerogative of raiſing ourſelves to thee, and of holding converſe with thee, the ſource and centre of all minds, their only point of reſt, be perennially more important, ever dearer to us; and grant that we may ſeek and find therein that pure delight, that abiding felicity which everywhere elſe we ſhould ſeek in vain. Bleſs to this end the doctrines that are now to be delivered to us. Let our propenſity to pleaſure be thereby

thereby refined and elevated. Theſe our petitions we humbly offer up unto thee in the name of our lord and ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt, and call upon thee further in his words: Our father, &c.

EPHES. V. 18.

Be filled with the Spirit.

FREQUENTLY have I already recommended to you intellectual pleaſures, my pious hearers, as the pureſt, the nobleſt, the moſt permanent of all others; already often told you that they are the moſt worthy of us, both as men and as chriſtians, the moſt conſiſtent with our high vocation, and the fitteſt preparative for our entrance on the future ſtate; often have I encouraged and exhorted you to give them the preference to all other kinds of pleaſure, with the aſſurance that you will never repent of your choice. Even in my laſt diſcourſe in treating of the value of ſenſual pleaſure, I recommended thoſe of the mind as far more excellent. And this they certainly are; as certainly and indiſputably as our ſpirit is of a nobler nature and conſtitution than our body; as certainly as things undecaying are better than things tranſitory, infinite greater than finite, eternity of more conſequence than time; as certainly as that our affinity with angelic natures, with Jeſus Chriſt, with God himſelf, is more glo-

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rious and covetable than our affinity with the plants and the beafts of the field. He that is acquainted with thefe pleafures of the mind, who knows them by experience, has often enjoyed them, fuch an one can never more do without them; they will be as urgent neceffaries to him as eating and drinking to the fenfual man; and he runs fo little rifk of lofing his relifh for them, that on the contrary we will have caufe to beware left for them he fhould utterly defpife and neglect all other pleafures of an inferior order, the enjoyment of which is not only lawful, but is often needful and falutary.

And yet comparatively but few are of this opinion. Senfual pleafures are in general far more highly prized, far more ardently fought after, and far more fteadily purfued than intellectual. The former will find a hundred admirers and encomiafts, where the latter will fcarcely have one. The former make a hundred times the fubject and folace of focial converfations; while the latter are fcarcely mentioned, I mean mentioned with truth and fentiment. Every one praifes the former, whether young or old, whether he partakes in them or not; while the latter are but feldom openly and directly held and declared to be what they really are.

And whence may this arife? May it not, partly at leaft, proceed from our not being fufficiently converfant with thefe pleafures; from our not rightly

rightly underſtanding what they are, what they produce, what they procure to us, and wherein their proper value conſiſts? Indeed the eſſence of pleaſure, of whatever kind, or that which cauſes pleaſure to be ſo, is not eaſy to be deſcribed, not ſtrictly to be analyzed. Pleaſure is ſenſation. He that would properly know it, he that would taſte its ſweets, muſt himſelf experience, muſt himſelf enjoy it. The ſources of theſe pleaſures however may be aſcertained, ſome of their fruits and effects may be illuſtrated; ſomething at leaſt may be ſaid of their origin and quality. Probably this may tend to excite a greater attention towards them, ſome appetence for them, perhaps a determination may be produced to ſtudy to become better acquainted with them.

And this, my pious hearers, is what I am deſirous of doing in regard of intellectual pleaſures by my preſent diſcourſe. I may perhaps contribute either to render ſuch to whom they are ſtrange, or not ſufficiently familiar, more attentive to them, or to ſtrengthen and confirm the inclination and affection for them in ſuch as have already directed their taſte that way.

This is, if not the only, at leaſt one indiſpenſable method of obeying the apoſtle's exhortation in our text, addreſſed to chriſtians, "Be ye filled with the ſpirit." Be thoroughly imbued, would he ſay, with the ſpirit of religion and of chriſtianity; open the avenues of your underſtanding and your heart

heart to their influence; let that which makes you wife and upright chriſtians, which inſpires you with devout and virtuous affections, which will give you a ſpiritual life, ſpiritual faculties and ſpiritual joys, be much dearer to you, much more earneſtly ſought after by you, than the gratification of the ſenſual appetites. Seek them with infinitely greater ardour than ſuch as degrade your ſpirit, and may eaſily lead you to licentiouſneſs and profligacy. We ſhall not therefore depart from the ſcope and deſign of the apoſtolical exhortation, in admoniſhing you concerning intellectual pleaſures, and their pre-eminent value. To this end I ſhall firſt make ſome general obſervations on intellectual pleaſures; and then go through the principal kinds of them in particular, and point out their value.

You know, my pious hearers, from my laſt diſcourſe, what we are to underſtand by intellectual pleaſures; namely, pleaſures which our mind procures to itſelf, which are produced more by its own activity than by the impreſſions made by extrinſic objects on our ſenſes or ſenſitive organs. Theſe, our organs of ſenſe, indeed furniſh us with the primary materials, they convey to our mind the firſt ideas of them, and the ſtock is continually increaſed by their inſtrumentality. But our mind works up theſe materials, improves this fund; it arranges, ſeparates, aſſociates them; it reflects upon what we have learnt and experienced concerning outward objects by our ſight, by our hearing, by our

our feeling, and the like; proceeds from particulars to generals, from viſible to inviſible: and whenever it diſcovers order, truth, beauty, goodneſs, perfection, it forms ideas of them, more or leſs vivid and apparent, and withal looks back on itſelf and its powers with conſciouſneſs — or whenever it can only exert and apply its proper faculties eaſily and effectually in a manner adapted to its views and inclinations — let the things wherein it is employed be either true or not true, good or bad — it then enjoys what we term intellectual pleaſure. It has an agreeable ſenſation of its exiſtence, of its preſent condition, which is founded on this ſentiment and exertion of its capacities and abilities, and its relation to the whole material and intellectual world.

Theſe intellectual pleaſures are frequently divided into pleaſures of the mind and pleaſures of the heart. The pleaſures of the mind are founded on knowledge, on clear perception, on plain or comprehenſive conception, luminous excurſions in the unbounded realms of truth; on the great variety of ideas, and as various, though uncommon connections between them; on eaſy, quick, happy turns of wit, applications of perſpicacity, of ingenuity, of fancy, of argument. The pleaſures of the heart, as they are called, conſiſt more in the lively ſenſation, contemplation and diſplay of what is true, beautiful, good, generous, or great and extraordinary; but principally in benevolence and beneficence. — In fact,

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they are not eaſily to be diſcriminated, being all operations of one and the ſame intellectual faculty, the mind and heart having generally an equal ſhare in each, and we need not take the trouble any further to diſtinguiſh them. We will juſt add a few more general remarks on the natural and moral quality of theſe pleaſures, before we proceed to their particular kinds.

Every intellectual, as well as every ſenſual pleaſure, is real pleaſure, is, for the time, a really agreeable ſenſation, whether morally good or bad, innocent or criminal. When the envious and malevolent man deſcries any ſecret infirmity in his brother, drags into view his imperfections and failings, recalls them on every occaſion to his mind, and delights himſelf in dwelling on them; when the revengeful man repreſents to himſelf in lively colours ſome cataſtrophe that has befallen an enemy with all its diſmal conſequences, and is elated in the idea; they both receive a real pleaſure, they actually feel agreeable ſenſations. But this pleaſure is ſo far from being enviable, that it is deteſtable, ſhocking — diabolical pleaſure; a pleaſure that diſturbs, debaſes, diſgraces the man; a pleaſure, that ſooner or later repays him with pain and repentance, deprives him of a thouſand nobler kinds of pleaſure, and renders him at length incapable of them.

Hence it follows, that there are likewiſe unlawful and criminal intellectual pleaſures. Not all and each are harmleſs; not all and each are noble, not all worthy

worthy of the man and the chriſtian. To deviſe extenſive, complicated, artful ſchemes for compaſſing the hurt of another, and to put them in execution notwithſtanding all the obſtacles and difficulties a man meets with in his crooked, dark and perilous way; to employ his ſagacity in raiſing difficulties and perplexing doubts on matters indiſpenſable to religion — to offend the innocent by his wit, to obſcure the merit of the deſerving, to make venerable objects ridiculous, to give free ſcope to humour in writings or diſcourſe, whether it may wound or pleaſe; all this is intellectual pleaſure, but vile, diſgraceful, guilty pleaſure; pleaſure that can excite agreeable ſenſations only in the heart of the illiberal, the evil-minded and vicious man.

Still farther. Even harmleſs, exalted intellectual pleaſures may become hurtful when immoderately enjoyed, when continued till they exhauſt the faculties, deſtroy the health, or even ſhorten life. Even innocent, noble intellectual pleaſures may become criminal, if by our inflexible attachment to them we are prevented from diſcharging the duties of our ſtation, our office, or our vocation; if they deprive us of the ſociety and converſation of our fellow-creatures; if by too ſtrictly avoiding all ſenſual or ſocial pleaſures, we bring wiſdom, virtue and piety into diſrepute. Thus will even the pleaſure of devotion be a pernicious and criminal pleaſure in reſpect to him, who for them ſhould neglect the affairs of his calling, or omit his duty to his parents, his

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children, his dependants, or his family. — — Theſe obſervations, my pious hearers, will ſuffice for rectifying your ideas on what intellectual pleaſures are in general — and cautioning you againſt miſapplying theſe corrected notions of them. Let us now briefly run over the principal kinds of theſe intellectual pleaſures, and point out their nature and value.

Every application of our intellectual powers that is performed without violence, or wearifome efforts, with eaſe and effect, procures us intellectual pleaſure, be the object what it may, important or unimportant, great or ſmall, or whether it relate to religion, to ſciences, or arts, or the common affairs of life. Whenever we frame in our minds clear ideas of things, diſcriminate them more or leſs by our ſagacity, diſcover their principle and connexion by our reaſon — or, by our imagination, make what is abſent to be preſent to us, render the inviſible viſible, give a reality in our minds to what is barely poſſible; and thus, as it were, create new worlds of our own: whenever we exert our faculties in this or any ſimilar manner, and are conſcious of it to ourſelves, we immediately experience a pleaſing ſentiment of exiſtence, and of our actual condition; we are glad to feel that we have theſe faculties, that we can employ them, that we are able to employ them in ſuch various ways, and with ſuch good effects, that we can perform theſe, or other matters by them. And this ſentiment of our faculties muſt be the more

pleaſing to us, muſt communicate ſo much greater value to our pleaſure, the more clearly we perceive that they eſſentially belong to our ſelf, and are a far more ſolid, more durable ground of our perfection and happineſs, than all outward things that we poſſeſs and eſteem.

We therefore, farther, enjoy intellectual pleaſure when we labour at the augmentation and rectification of our knowledge, and are employed to this end in reading or reflection, or in both of them at once. And in fact, my pious hearers, what a pleaſure muſt it procure us when we contemplate the works of nature; when we inveſtigate the plants, the animals, man, their various qualities, abilities, capacities, views, connections, operations, deſtinations; when we contemplate the diverſity, the grandeur, the order, the beauty, the harmony of all the creator's works! Everywhere life, activity, action — everywhere deſign, principles, means of ſatisfaction and happineſs or actual enjoyment, infinitely diverſified enjoyment of ſatisfaction and happineſs; on all ſides ſo great and ſuch various powers ariſing, expanding and operating in their allotted ſphere; operating in ſuch various, in ſuch contrary directions, and ever contributing to the ſupport and advantage of the whole! What a pleaſure when we raiſe ourſelves in thought from earth to heaven, and there loſe ourſelves among the numberleſs multitudes of ſuns and worlds, of ſources of exiſtence and life, of new theatres of the

majeſty and glory of God, and ſoar from one part of his immenſe dominion to another, and nowhere diſcover either term or limits to his powers and wiſdom; when we find the creator of the univerſe everywhere equally great, immenſely great, in every part as in the whole, in a grain of ſand as in the fabric of the world immenſely great and immenſely good! What a delightful, what a raviſhing ſentiment of our faculties, of our exiſtence, of our relative ſituations to the world and its author, muſt not theſe contemplations, theſe proſpects yield us! With what pure intellectual pleaſure pervade our frame! And this in a greater or a leſs degree, does every enlargement of our perceptions, every addition to our knowledge, every not totally ſucceſsleſs inveſtigation of nature and the ſcope of things, every ſtep whereby we approach towards the diſcovery of truth, or which gives us a plainer and clearer conception of the truths we already know. This in particular does the meditation on the doctrines of religion, as God himſelf has revealed them to us in his word, and principally by Jeſus. The purer, the richer, the more authentic theſe ſources of knowledge, the more muſt they ſatisfy our thirſt after light and truth and certainty; the more true and laſting pleaſure muſt we acquire from them.

A third ſource of intellectual pleaſure lies partilarly in reflection on ourſelves, on our nature, our powers and capacities, our preſent and future ap-

pointment. Certainly, a ſpacious and fertile field of meditation, which, if we love goodneſs with all our imperfections and frailties, opens to us far more pleaſant than unpleaſant proſpects, ſupplies us with far more materials for agreeable than diſagreeable ſenſations. What man but muſt rejoice in his exiſtence, when he is learning to know and to feel and to preſage what he is, and what hereafter he will be and become; when, with all his abaſement and infirmity he diſcovers in himſelf evident lineaments of the image of deity, the germ of future elevation and grandeur; when he ſees how much he may grow, from everlaſting to everlaſting, in knowledge, in virtue, in activity, in felicity; when he conſiders what God has already done for man by Jeſus, and how much greater things he may hope for from him in futurity. What magnificently promiſing prediſpoſitions, what great, and as yet almoſt undeveloped abilities, what active, far operative, but at preſent circumſcribed and limited on all ſides, and reſtricted powers, does he not find within him, when he at times ſucceeds in being abſorbed, as it were in himſelf, and is able to obſerve the action and proceſs of his own mind! Then how elated muſt he be in his deſtination, and how much greater and nobler muſt this joy be than all ſenſible and tranſient things can give him!

Fourthly, it is intellectual pleaſure, or procures us intellectual pleaſure, when we labour at our moral improvement, and find our labour attended with

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ſucceſs. What agreeable ſenſations we feel when we have avoided one temptation to ſin, or happily conquered another; when we form a good reſolution and carry it into effect; now, no more to commit a fault that uſed ſo often and ſo ſuddenly to ſurprize us, no longer to ſubmit to its vehement attractions, then to perform with readineſs and joy ſome good and generous action, which uſed to ſeem ſo hard, to which we were much averſe, and muſt be urged to it by compulſion! What a pleaſure, when we perceive a conſtantly increaſing degree of truth, order and harmony prevailing between our perceptions, ſentiments, inclinations and actions, that we are ever ſeldomer liable to errors and ſins, ſeldomer deceived by ſenſual appetites or agitated by irregular paſſions; that our love of goodneſs is always improving in ſtrength and activity; that we are conſtantly advancing towards chriſtian liberty and perfection, and thereby to a nearer reſemblance and greater capacity of communion with our leader and lord Jeſus Chriſt, and even with God himſelf! To conquer ourſelf and the world; to know that we are paſſed from bondage into freedom, and to enjoy this freedom conſtantly more intire; to feel new life, new ſtrength within; to be proceeding on the way of wiſdom and virtue; to be conſtantly advancing nearer to the prize of our high calling, — what intrinſic, what pure delights muſt this procure the man who has a conſcious ſenſe of his own inherent dignity and is ſtriving at perfection! And

how much more value muſt theſe pleaſures have in his eyes, than all ſuch as honours, riches, outward proſperity or the gratification of ſenſe could procure him!

We enjoy fifthly intellectual pleaſure, when we engage in profitable and inſtructive converſation with others; when we reciprocally impart our perceptions, our obſervations, our doubts, our experiences to each other; confirm one another in our good chriſtian diſpoſitions; mutually conſult one another on our moſt ſerious concerns and proſpects in the preſent and in the future world; and this in the ſpirit of love, in the language of confidence, from the abundance of our heart. There one thought begets and unfolds another; one ſentiment excites and corroborates another; one heart warms and elates another. One helps another forward on the road of knowledge, of wiſdom, of virtue and of happineſs. Each partakes of the light, of the warmth, of the life, of the abilities of the reſt. And what is more bleſſed than in this manner to give and to receive, and thereby to unite more cloſely with the wiſe and good! How far muſt not this noble intellectual pleaſure which can never be exhauſted and never become inſipid, which can never draw after it either vexation or remorſe, how far muſt it excel every other leſs intellectual kind of ſocial pleaſure!

A ſixth ſource of intellectual pleaſure, not leſs exuberant and ſtill more ſo than the former, is a general,

general, hearty benevolence towards all mankind. How agreeably muſt it employ the mind of the man, of the chriſtian! What mild and blifsful ſenſations muſt it excite and ſupport! He ſees his brethren and ſiſters in all the human race, creatures and children of his heavenly Father; partners in his immortality and the felicities of the eternal kingdom. How pleaſant then muſt their countenances be to him! How much beauty, goodneſs, lovelineſs, muſt he behold in them, which is forever inviſible to the eyes of the envious, the malicious, the thoughtleſs man! How great an intereſt, how agreeable and delightful an intereſt does he take in their fortunes, their merits, their ſucceſſes, and their progreſs on the path of perfection! How cordially does he rejoice in it all! How bleſſed in them and with them; while all is indifferent to the unfeeling man, who finds nothing in it for his thoughts or his ſenſations!

And when he can act conſiſtently with his benevolence, can actually do good to his brethren, when he can ſerve and aſſiſt them, can comfort and relieve them, aſſuage their miſery, advance their happineſs; when he can in general lead a uſeful life and diſpenſe beneficence diffuſively around him; how happy is he then! What pleaſures ſtream into his heart, and what ſtill richer, never-failing ſources of pleaſure has he to hope for in futurity, in the proſpect of all the good conſequences of his beneficent deeds!

Laſtly, the nobleſt, the moſt exalted kind of in-

tellectual pleaſure, is undoubtedly the pleaſure of devotion. Repreſent to yourſelves, my dear friends, that at leaſt you may acquire ſome conceptions of this pleaſure, repreſent to yourſelves a man who raiſes himſelf in the utmoſt intenſity of his mind to God; whoſe ſoul is entirely abſorbed in the ſentiment of deity, who apprehends the preſence of God with greater vivacity than ordinary, moſt clearly diſcerns his power, his wiſdom, his goodneſs on all ſides wherever he turns his eyes and his thoughts, feels that in this God he lives and moves and has his being, that this God is his creator, his preſerver, his father, his benefactor and will be ſo for ever; that through him he ſubſiſts and thinks and acts and is happy; a man who rejoices in his God and his cloſe and intimate connection with him; experiences the ſuperlative, continually efficient benevolence of this God towards him; recollects all the bounties he has received from him, and expects in full aſſurance ſtill larger ſupplies of bounty from him: a man that proſtrates himſelf in ſentiments of veneration and love, before the Omnipreſent and Allbountiful, addreſſes him as the being from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; loſes himſelf in the contemplation of his majeſty and glory; acquieſces entirely in his will, in perfect confidence ſurrenders to him the guidance and diſpoſal of his life, lays all his thoughts, his ſentiments, his deſires, his wants, his cares, his hopes, without heſitation or reſerve before him; and from the fulneſs

neſs of divine power and love imbibes and enjoys whatever has a tendency to ſtrengthen and conſole and improve and bleſs him: a man who conceives of this God as he has revealed himſelf to us in Jeſus, and by him apprehends the entire felicity of his near connection and affinity with the only-begotten of the Father, with the ſaviour and deliverer of mankind, the entire felicity of being a redeemed of the Lord, a member of his ſpiritual body, a chriſtian, and of thus having fellowſhip with the Father and with his ſon Jeſus: a man, who, in theſe bleſſed moments of ſuch inward apprehenſions of the deity, unites himſelf with all his brethren upon earth in the preſence of their common father; who embraces them all, like him, with benevolence and love, who ſtrives to bring them all with himſelf nearer to him, to render them more well-pleaſing in his ſight and more ſuſceptible of his grace and goodneſs: a man, in ſhort, who entirely loſes ſight of all that is terreſtrial and tranſitory, already tranſports himſelf in ſpirit into his future better ſtate, joins the ſociety of juſt men made perfect, ſoars to the bliſsful abodes of ſuperior intelligences, already taſtes ſomething of their purer felicity, and enjoys by anticipation the pleaſures he is hereafter to receive: repreſent to yourſelves, I ſay, ſuch a man, ſuch a chriſtian, and tell me whether ſuch exerciſes of devotion do not render him happy in a high degree; whether the pleaſure, the ſatisfaction, the joy they procure him, muſt not be

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the greateſt, the moſt exalted, the moſt covetable of all the pleaſures whereof he is ſuſceptible.

Behold then, my dear friends, ſo many abundant ſources of intellectual pleaſure that ſtand open to you! You may all draw water out of theſe wells of ſalvation — draw joy and felicity from them! — Intellectual pleaſures are not reſerved excluſively for the ſcholar or the divine. No, they are acceſſible to you all! None are deficient in the capacities and means for the enjoyment of them; none can neglect them without manifeſtly injuring his happineſs. But indeed they are not alike copious, equally lively, equally agreeable and ſatisfactory to all. Indeed they muſt be almoſt wholly unknown and foreign to you, unleſs you exerciſe your intellectual powers, unleſs you elevate them above ſenſible things, unleſs you accuſtom yourſelves to reflect upon what you ſee, what you hear, what you do, and what you experience; if you ſtudiouſly avoid retirement and ſilence, the parent of the generality, the pureſt of intellectual pleaſures; or if you regard knowledge and wiſdom and virtue with an eye of indifference.

Avoid theſe errors, my pious hearers, as you would have a right apprehenſion of ſpiritual pleaſures, and enjoy them when apprehended, and be happy in their enjoyment. Exerciſe yourſelves in whatever may procure you ſuch pleaſures, though at firſt it ſhould ſeem inconvenient or diſagreeable to you. As there are various kinds of ſenſual plea-

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ſures of which we cannot partake, unleſs we have ſtudied and been trained to them; ſo likewiſe muſt our capacities be drawn forth and trained to intellectual pleaſures, our taſte muſt be formed to them, we muſt know them, muſt uſe the proper means to acquire them, muſt ſtudy to enjoy, and to enjoy them more completely.

This do, my pious hearers, learn to reflect, to think with conſciouſneſs and conſideration, think on what you have already thought of, again and again, till it be clear and perſpicuous to your mind, and truly important to your heart. Study to read, to hear, to apprehend, to obſerve, with attention, reflection, and intereſt; learn to collect your thoughts from diſperſion; frequently call them off from outward objects, and fix them on yourſelf, on your preſent condition and your future appointment; learn particularly to converſe with God, in all ſituations to think of him and to look towards him, to rejoice in his exiſtence, his preſence and his bounties. Learn to pray, and thereby to have communion with him. Do this, though never ſo imperfectly at firſt, in never ſo ſhort, ſo abrupt and irkſome a way, as may reaſonably be expected from your infirmity and want of practice. But do it frequently; ſet apart for it certain hours and ſeaſons; return to it again; let not the firſt difficulties deter you; require not to reap before you have ſown. The oftener, the more ſedulouſly you do this, the eaſier and the more cheerfully

fully will you do it, the more pleaſure will it procure you, the higher reliſh will you find in this kind of pleaſure; and ſoon you will not be able to do without it, — you will prefer it infinitely beyond all others.

I mean not to ſay, my pious hearers, that you muſt relinquiſh all ſenſual pleaſures, that you ſhould ſeek and enjoy only ſuch as are merely intellectual. No, you may enjoy them both: but theſe are much purer, nobler, more laſting than the others; theſe are able to render you far more excellent and happy than they can do; theſe muſt be of infinitely greater value to you, if you would be what you are deſigned to be and to become as men and as chriſtians.

And herein, my chriſtian friends, you may and ſhould take for your pattern Jeſus, our great captain and leader on the path of wiſdom and felicity. He enjoyed alſo ſenſual pleaſures; ſat down to feaſts; aſſociated with men of various kinds; ate and drank, as he ſays himſelf, like other folks, without diſtinguiſhing himſelf from them by any particular auſterity. But ſpiritual pleaſures had infinitely the preference with him. To accompliſh the will of him that ſent him, and to be uſeful to his brethren, was his food, his pleaſanteſt, his darling occupation. The pleaſure of doing good he preferred to all the accommodations of life, to ſleep, to reſt, to every other pleaſure. He paſt whole nights in exerciſes of devotion and prayer;

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not from conſtraint, not becauſe it was his duty, but becauſe it was his delight, the true life of his ſoul. He took an intereſt in all that happened around him; but always ſo that his mind was employed in reflecting upon it, and ſeeking to apply it by ſome means or other to the inſtruction and advantage of ſuch as were preſent. God, futurity, his miſſion from the Father, his return to him, his grand, beneficent work on earth, were ever before his eyes and ever in his heart. Love to God, his heavenly Father, and love to man, directing and bleſſing him at every ſtep, were the ſoul of all his ſentiments and actions, the ſource of his ſublimeſt joy. Endeavour to reſemble him in this, all you who are ſtriving for chriſtian perfection and happineſs! Conſider yourſelves not only as ſenſual but alſo as ſpiritual beings; not merely as mortal, but alſo as immortal men; not merely as ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth, but likewiſe as denizens of heaven; as ſuch, look not merely at things viſible and tranſitory, but likewiſe and ſtill more at the unſeen and eternal; ſtrive to anſwer your appointment in all its extent, and ſo enjoy every real ſatisfaction, every kind of felicity which God has prepared for you, both in this and in the future world.

SERMON X.

The Value of Devotion.

GOD, father of all ſpirits, thou life and joy of all thinking rational beings in heaven and on earth; how precious to us is the thought of thee! How it elevates our mind! How it enlarges our heart! What a radiance it pours upon all thy works and ways, upon all our fortunes, upon our preſent and future deſtinies! Yes, when we meditate on thee, we do what man alone of all the creatures of the earth can do, and what all ſuperior intelligences eſteem with us their higheſt honour, their pureſt pleaſure! When we ſolemnly approach thee and feel thy more immediate preſence, ſorrow and trouble and anxious cares take their flight and evacuate our breaſts; then are we in the preſence of our kind and gracious parent, and feel ourſelves ſurrounded entirely with the effects of eternal love! When we have communion with thee, no want, no danger, no diſtreſs alarms us; we can find all things with thee and draw from thy fullneſs

neſs light and power and felicity. How happy then are we, that we know thee, and can raiſe ourſelves to thee and have communion with thee! And how much happier ſhould we be, were we enabled duly to prize the value of this privilege, and to uſe it in its whole extent; if we kept ourſelves continually nigh thee, ſought and found thee everywhere, and conſtantly walked in the light of thy countenance! Do thou thyſelf, o primæval ſource of boundleſs love, ſuſtain and ſtrengthen our ſpirits in ſtriving to aſcend to thee; draw thou thyſelf our hearts entirely to thee; grant us ever better to underſtand our bleſſed connection with thee, ever more intimately to feel it and ever to think and act more conſiſtently with it! In the furtherance of this deſign bleſs the conſiderations that are now to employ us. Teach us ſo to recognize and apprehend the dignity and the bleſſedneſs of devotion, that we may learn to revere and love it and become progreſſively more capable of enjoying its delights. For this we pray thee in the name of our lord Jeſus Chriſt, and as his votaries ſum up our petitions in his words: Our father, &c.

EPHES. v. 18.

Be filled with the ſpirit.

DEVOTION, my chriſtian auditors, that nobleſt of all intellectual pleaſures, is ſubject to the animadverſion, not only of confeſſedly wicked men, but at times likewiſe of better diſpoſed perſons, as promiſing more than it performs, as being more cried up than its merits deſerve. The principles however on which theſe judgments are founded are very different. The former, the bad, the vicious man has no ſentiment, no feeling for refined intellectual pleaſures; God and religion and ſilent meditation upon them, are never of any importance to him; often perhaps become irkſome or frightful to him: accordingly he rejects every thing that he hears ſaid and reported of the joys of this nature, as the effects of fancy and ſelf-deceit. — The latter, the better diſpoſed man, does not proceed ſo far. The exerciſes of religion are not indifferent to him. He has ſurmiſes, preſentiments in their favour, that they may be very uſeful and agreeable. He has even attended theſe exerciſes not always entirely without pleaſure. But prejudices, want of experience, imperfect examination of the ſubject, prevent him from taking them for what they really are, from enjoying what

others pretend to enjoy in them; and the ſuſpicion of their being leſs important, and leſs productive, is continually increaſing upon him. — —I have frequently, ſays he to himſelf, I have frequently heard talk of the value, the excellency and the utility of devotion. Devotion, it is ſaid, diffuſes a reſplendent light into the mind of man; warms his heart with the nobleſt ſentiments, with the moſt delightful ſenſations of the love of God and of the human race; is his beſt comforter in all the cares and troubles of life; procures him the pureſt, the ſublimeſt ſatisfactions; and conveys him continually nearer to the deity. I will believe it, ſays the erroneous or the feeble chriſtian, ſince people ſay ſo, whoſe teſtimony is of great weight with me. But my experience, I muſt confeſs, is not in correſpondence with it. I pray; I read too; I attend the church ſervice; and I do all this with attention, and in the view of becoming better and happier. But the alacrity, the pleaſure, the joy, which others boaſt, I feel nothing of. On the contrary, the performance of theſe duties is frequently burdenſome to me, I am often forced to do violence to myſelf, if I would avoid diſtraction on ſuch occaſions; and, after theſe exerciſes, I commonly find myſelf neither better, nor more compoſed, nor more ſatisfied than I was before. Let a ſtrong temptation to ſin preſent itſelf, I yield as directly to it; if any misfortune occurs, it as quickly overſets me; if I ſuffer any conſiderable loſs, I can

ſcarcely ſupport it; am I to make any ſacrifice to virtue, to forego all thoughts of revenge, or to do good to my enemy; I am as deficient in power and inclination to it; if I fall into danger, I no more know what part to take, or whom to truſt. Where then is the mighty advantage, the great bleſſing of devotion? Is it not all perhaps fanaticiſm and fancy? — — No, that it is not, my chriſtian brother, my chriſtian ſiſter! It is truth and reaſon; it is really and truly what ſuch as underſtand and revere it, give out that it is. The deficiency of thy experience cannot prove the contrary. It only proves, that thy devotion is not what it might and what it ought to be.

Everything that paſſes for devotion is not truly ſuch. No term perhaps is more laviſhed, miſapplied, and prophaned than this. One while it is made to ſignify outward, ſolemn rites and cercmonies; at another, the merely being preſent at the public worſhip; ſometiimes a cold reading or repetition of certain forms of prayer; ſometimes every reflection, however erroneous, on God or religion, is honoured with this venerable name. — But all this is not devotion; at moſt is only ſomething like devotion, or ſomething that may excite us to devotion. — It cannot therefore have the value, produce the advantages, nor afford the joys which devotion confers upon us. — No, this is not what the words of the apoſtle in our text imply, the being filled with the ſpirit. The ſignification

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of this is of a much larger extent. It means a heart thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of religion and chriſtianity, and having a perfect confidence in them. To ſettle your notions on this head, my pious hearers, to warn you againſt thoſe miſconceptions of it, and to give you ſome ſuggeſtions to worthy and profitable devotion, is the deſign of my diſcourſe to-day. To this end I ſhall do two things: firſt, point out to you what devotion is, wherein its value conſiſts, what benefit it procures to mankind; and then, what is required of a man, what he muſt do, wherein he muſt exerciſe himſelf, of what he muſt beware, for reaping this benefit from it; and in particular for enjoying the pure pleaſure we are promiſed from devotion, and for conſtantly heightening that enjoyment.

Devotion is not ſo much a duty, as a privilege and the reward of duty. It is not to be commanded; not to be extorted; all men are not capable of it; all cannot enjoy it in the ſame manner, and to the ſame degree. It is the property rather of the confirmed and trained than of the weak and unſettled chriſtian. It beſpeaks an enlightened mind, a good, well-regulated heart, an innocent conduct, free from all intentional tranſgreſſions and iniquities, a certain practice and aptitude in reflecting on ſpiritual ſubjects, a confirmed taſte for theſe matters and theſe reflections; in ſhort, a certain diſpoſition for retirement, and for ſelf-inveſtigation. When the man, the chriſtian,

in poſſeſſion of theſe qualities, collects his thoughts together, retires to ſolitude, and there turns his mind on God and ſacred objects, the attention he beſtows on them is devotion. Theſe objects are to him of extreme importance; his heart takes the greateſt, the ſtrongeſt intereſt in them; there ariſe in him ſentiments of reverence, of love, of gratitude towards God, of confidence in him, of entire reſignation to his will, ſentiments of joy, of hope, of affiance, of aſpirations after purer and more exalted virtue and happineſs, after a cloſer communion with the deity, a more intimate union with Jeſus, as the delegate of God and the head of the chriſtian fold; and then he enjoys the benefit of devotion, the advantages and the pleaſures ſhe procures her friends and confidents. And how great are theſe advantages! how diverſified theſe benefits and theſe pleaſures!

Nothing elevates and fortifies the ſpirit of a man more than devotion. When the devout man lifts up himſelf to God, in adoration of his grandeur and glory, he exalts himſelf to the father of ſpirits, to the eternal ſource of light, of power, of truth, of beauty, of perfection; has a conſcious ſenſe of his connection, his intimate, indiſſoluble, his bleſſed connection with this firſt and greateſt and beſt of beings; he ſees and conſiders all around him as the work of his hands, as the objects of his providence and complacency; ſees and conſiders himſelf as his creature, as his rational ſubject, as his eminently

nently favoured child, as a veſſel of his loving-kindneſs and mercy, as an inſtrument of his all-quickening ſpirit, his ever-operating power; and when he thus approaches his Creator and Father, and has ſuch a communion with him, how much more juſtly, generouſly, nobly does he learn to think, to judge, to feel! How ſtrikingly does he perceive the wretchedneſs of all human grandeur! How far does he ſoar above the thouſands of little terreſtrial concerns, ſo many inſignificant objects of the envy, the jealouſy, the diſcord of mankind! How many more and much loftier things does he comprehend with the moſt intimate participation, with complacency and love! And what ſtrength moſt this impart to his mind! How infinitely muſt it enlarge his viſible horizon and the range of his comprehenſion, how much the ſenſibility of his heart! What a much nobler, more heavenly, more godlike frame of mind, muſt it give him!

For theſe reaſons, nothing advances a man further in virtue than devotion. It makes him better acquainted with God, the original of all that is beautiful and good and venerable and amiable; it renders him more intimate with Jeſus, the viſible image of his father, the ſum and ſubſtance of all human perfection; diſcovers to him on all ſides greater diſplays of truth and order and benignity in every part of the immenſe kingdom of God, in all the methods of providence and the adminiſtration of the Moſt High; cauſes him to apprehend the

dignity of his nature and the grandeur of his appointment; kindles, inflames his avidity to be and to become entirely what he may and ſhould be and become; tranſports him beyond the borders of death and the grave, and there gives him a glimpſe of the glorious conſequences of his endeavours, to think and to act aright and to do the will of his God: and muſt not this, my pious hearers, make virtue ever dearer to him, the practice of it conſtantly eaſier, every ſacrifice that it may require of him continually more agreeable? Will this ever ſuffer him to ſlacken his zeal in acquiring a nearer and brighter reſemblance to Chriſt, in the imitation of God, his heavenly father, and in fitting himſelf for that future life in which his faculties will be improved and his virtues exalted?

Nothing at the ſame time is a ſurer refuge to the good man from the troubles and vexations of life than devotion. In the ſolemn hour of devotion, he ſees everything in quite another light, in combinations totally different. Then many evils ceaſe to be evils in his ſight, and are transformed into benefits. Many a gloomy period of his life then brightens up, and that which appeared to him an inſidious and mazy way, becomes ſtraight and ſecure. He then learns to underſtand all the events that befall him, though not in their entire correſpondence, yet he ſees and underſtands that they have a correſpondence, and that the wiſeſt and beſt. Then he draws near with filial boldneſs to his

his father in heaven, opens his heart before him, caſts all his cares upon him, acquieſces entirely in the will of him, who conſtantly wills and does the beſt. In his preſence he fears no evil; under his protection he apprehends no danger; his gracious and paternal countenance has nothing terrible and revengeful in it to him even when he ſtumbles and falls; he ſees in it, as well as in the impreſſion of it, the countenance of Jeſus, nothing but commiſeration and grace; nay, when he fixes a ſteady look on him, even death lays by its terrors; how can it tear him from the arms, from the heart of his Father, whoſe tenderneſs he ſo intimately feels, and whoſe love is as eternal as himſelf?

Nothing in ſhort yields purer and ſublimer joys to the good man than devotion. When, my dear friends, when ſhould a man more rejoice in his exiſtence, when give freer ſcope to his joy, than when he thinks moſt fervently on his intimate connection with his Creator and Father, and apprehends moſt intimately his preſence with him? When has he more cauſe to triumph in his life, and to be ſatisfied with his lot, than when he is ſenſible to the dignity and happineſs of a creature formed after the image of God, of a chriſtian called to a bleſſed immortality; than when the loveliеſt proſpects in a better world lie expanded before him; when he is animated by the infallible hope of being more cloſely united with Jeſus and of always approaching nearer to God; when he feels what perfection he is capa-

ble of, and what felicities await him? And what pleaſures can be more deſirable or more refined than theſe, which I may enjoy in the moſt lonely ſolitude, and in the moſt adverſe circumſtances; which I may even then enjoy when I am abandoned of all that is without me, of all that ſurrounds me, when every creature refuſes me its comfort, its help, its ſupport, when I am encompaſſed by darkneſs and the ſhadow of death? And all this I may promiſe myſelf from the pleaſures of devotion. On this the good man may ſecurely rely. It will never refuſe him its ſupport and aſſiſtance. In this aſylum his ſafety dwells. This ſanctuary ſtands always open to him, and never will he flee to it in vain. So great, my pious hearers, is the value, ſo manifold the advantages of devotion!

Are ye ambitious now to enjoy theſe benefits, theſe advantages, theſe pleaſures of devotion, my dear friends, it is by no means indifferent in what manner you proceed. We may facilitate this buſineſs; and we may likewiſe embarraſs it. Herein our own experience will be the beſt inſtructor. We may however preſerve you from many miſtakes and deviations; we may afford you a few helps; we may call your attention to the beſt method of treating the matter. And to this end, I ſhould hope, the following admonitions and rules will be of ſome ſervice to you.

The devotion which is calculated to procure us pleaſure and elation, muſt in the firſt place be founded

founded on a right apprehenſion, on juſt conceptions of God. If thou art weak and unhappy enough, o man, to conceive of God as a ſullen being, abſtracted from the world and his creatures, who has once given them certain faculties, preſcribed them certain laws, aſſigned them a particular place in the territory of his immenſe dominion, and then ſtands in no farther connection with them, has no influence over them, and takes no concern about them; — or, if thou conceive of God only as the Almighty, high above all as Creator and Monarch, before whom all worlds and all mankind are nothing, and whoſe power no creature is able to reſiſt; — or, if thou conceive of him as a ſevere, inexorable, implacable being, who holds every ſin to be an infinite affront to his majeſty, which can never be repaired, never remitted, never forgiven, which he muſt neceſſarily puniſh, and is continually prompt to puniſh; as a being that requires more of us than we are able to perform, who has conſigned the greateſt part of his rational offspring to everlaſting perdition, and in whoſe dominion more evil than good, more miſery than happineſs prevails; if thou form theſe and the like conceptions of God: certainly thy exerciſes of devotion can have no pleaſure, no joy, for thee. The ſentiment of God muſt be a terror to thee, and the more deeply it is imprinted on thy ſoul, the longer thou ſhalt dwell upon it, the more diſquietude and anxiety muſt aſſail thee. Thou wilt tremble before God as thy

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ſovereign and judge, thou wilt feel his authority over thee and thy dependence on him; but thou canſt not exult in them. — — Wouldſt thou do ſo, thou muſt form more juſt, more honourable conceptions of this adorable being. Thou muſt be acquainted with God as thy Father; revere him as eſſential love, as him who intends the welfare of all his creatures, who has deſigned them all for happineſs, who governs them with lenity and forbearance; who is not only righteous towards them, but long-ſuffering, gracious, merciful, and leads all, though by various ways, to the perfection whereof they are capable. Thou muſt know and revere him, as he has diſcovered himſelf to us by Jeſus, as a God who requires of us not a ſervile dread but a filial affection, who grants us all free acceſs to him, receives and bleſſes all, treats us as children and not like bondſmen, and forgives us our ſins, and will remember them no more, ſo ſoon as we repent and forſake them; as a God, whom we cannot better and more worthily honour than by entirely relying on him, by placing our whole truſt and confidence in him, and by expecting of him only good, and always what is beſt. Only then, o chriſtian, when thou haſt thus learnt to think of God; and makeſt thyſelf converſant with theſe ideas, only then will they ſoothe and exhilarate thy ſoul; then will the elevation of thy heart to God, the exerciſes of devotion be a comfort and a happineſs to thee!

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Would we farther enjoy frequently and in a ſuperior degree the profit and pleaſure of devotion, religion and piety muſt be the conſtant companions and guides of our life; they muſt animate us at all times, in all places, in all our occupations and in all our pleaſures; never totally ceaſe from acting upon us. The pious man keeps the Lord alway before him. The apprehenſion of God is never foreign to him, never abſent from him; he has ſo thoroughly interwoven it with the whole texture of his mind, and in ſuch various ways that everything reminds him of it, everything refers him to it, ſo that this ſentiment ſheds a living light around him, where perſons with whom it is leſs habitual and important, perceive not the leaſt incitement to it; where they would even deem it a folly to be occupied in it. This ſentiment thus uniformly attends him in the moments of ſacred ſilence and of earneſt elevation of his heart to God, amidſt the tumult of ſociety, in the affairs of his calling, ever teaching him to enjoy ſocial pleaſures with more cheerfulneſs and innocency, and to anſwer more faithfully the obligations of active life. Thus often does he feel the intimate preſence of his God, comprehend the language of his wiſdom and goodneſs in every plant, in every tree, in every animal, in every region, in the vernal morn, in the ſummer's day, in the cool ſequeſtered bower, on the bank of the placid ſtream, in the awful gloom of the foreſt; and there to the God whom he has not ſeen, but has intenſely thought of and ſenſibly felt, erects altars, monuments

ments in his heart, which on a thouſand ſimilar occaſions, excite in him ſimilar ideas and ſenſations. Thus he ſees and hears as it were his Maker, in the ruſhing of the torrent, in the howling of the winds, in the murmurs of the breeze, in the gathering of the ſtormy clouds, in the flaſh of the vivid lightning, and the majeſtic peals of thunder, in the mild refreſhing ſhower, and in the more copious falls of rain! He ſees and hears him with ſtill greater energy in mankind, his image, when he diſcovers truth and goodneſs and benevolence and beneficence and generous ſentiments and cordial love in the features, in the looks, in the diſcourſes, in the actions of his brethren. — And thus never is God far from him. He ſeeks and he finds him, and rejoices in him, be he where he may, buſied how he will, alone or in company, ſurrounded by animate or inanimate creatures. He is and lives and moves in God. And, when he collects his ſcattered thoughts, and directs his whole attention to him whom his ſoul loves and whoſe favour is its life, and can do this without interruption from external objects, how bleſſed to him muſt theſe hours, theſe moments be! How much more will theſe ſentiments expand and warm his heart! What a loftier flight will they give to his ſpirit, what livelier ſenſations to his heart! How much nearer muſt they bring him to the primordial ſource of light and bliſs!

Wouldſt thou therefore learn to underſtand and enjoy the pleaſures of devotion, my chriſtian brother, who complaineſt of the want of them; make

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the apprehenſion of God more familiar to thee. Repell it not when it preſents itſelf to thy mind; it can conſiſt with all thy other thoughts, ſenſations, occupations, pleaſures, if they be but lawful and innocent. Solace thyſelf much rather in theſe ideas; nouriſh and ſupport them as often as thou canſt nouriſh and ſupport them; imprint them deeply on thine heart, when thou canſt but in ſome ſort enjoy them as they paſs. — Do ſo likewiſe with everything that relates to religion, with every doctrine, every command, every promiſe, every example of chriſtianity. Do ſo particularly with the thoughts on Jeſus, our leader and deliverer, the ſimilitude and the vicegerent of God, our lord and king. Let his image, the image of his wiſdom, his ſublime, his bright and lively devotion, his generous philanthropy, his beneficent temper and conduct, frequently glide before thine eyes, be often contemplative and as it were viſible to thee. Make thyſelf conſtantly more and more converſant with theſe thoughts and ſenſations; bind them ſtill cloſer and cloſer with all that thou thinkeſt and feeleſt beſides, with whatever is in any way important to thee. Thus, when thou propoſeſt any peculiar exerciſe of devotion, it will be no extraneous tranſaction to thee; thou wilt not be going into unknown regions, but entering thy own inheritance; perſevere in that which at firſt thou canſt only endure for an inſtant, and enjoy in a greater degree, in completer freedom, that pleaſure which daily ſweetens to thee ſo

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many though perhaps but tranſient moments of thy life.

Would you thirdly, my pious hearers, enjoy the profit and the pleaſure of devotion, and not be deceived in your expectations from it, require not to enjoy them always in the ſame meaſure or degree. By ſo doing, you would endeavour after what is impoſſible, what is contrary to the nature of man and of devotion itſelf, and thus your hopes would often fail you. Our ideas, even of the moſt important objects, cannot always poſſeſs the ſame degree of perſpicuity; our emotions cannot at all times have the ſame degree of vivacity and force. Light and warmth have their variations, their alternate, ſometimes regular viciſſitudes in the moral as well as in the natural world, and in each individual, as in human ſociety at large. So when we turn our thoughts on God and religion, conſequently on the moſt momentous and moſt exalted objects, how much depends on our temperament at that particular time, on our outward circumſtances, on the affairs we have been tranſacting, on the perſons we have ſeen and converſed with, on the books we have read, or are then employed in reading! How different are even the doctrines of religion which we make the ſubject of our meditations or our exerciſes of devotion! How various the ſides on which they may be ſeen, and how different therefore the impreſſions they muſt make upon us! All of them cannot affect us alike; all of them cannot charm us into extaſy, all of them cannot call forth the tears of grief,

grief, of tenderneſs, or of joy. One while our underſtanding is moſt employed; at another, our heart; and ſometimes both at once and in a higher degree. Now, the ſenſe of our tranſgreſſions and failings bows us down to the abyſs, pervades us with ſhame and remorſe: at another time, we as ſincerely confeſs and abhor and condemn them, but without the ſame painful ſenſation. Now, the thoughts of God, of his majeſty and greatneſs, ſo fully poſſeſs us, make all the correſpondent conceptions and emotions at once ſo predominant and active, ſet all that is connected with them in our whole ſyſtem of thought and ſentiment in ſuch agitation, that we are totally abſorbed in wonder and adoration: at another time our eyes admit fewer rays of the divine effulgence, we conſider them with more compoſure, can diſtinguiſh them with greater facility and preciſion; and this, though not with tranſporting, yet with pure and real joy. One while we are more diſpoſed to reflect on the doctrines of religion with a ſedate and quiet mind, to rectify our conceptions of them, to penetrate deeper into their principles and combinations, and then it is not uſual for vehement emotions to ariſe: at another, we make a more immediate uſe of theſe doctrines, apply them directly to our pacification, to our comfort, to our encouragement, conſider and treat them ſo, as if they were promulgated merely for us, and were only to be applied to the preſent event, taſte and enjoy therefore their ſweetneſs and efficacy the more, and

are warmed and cheered by livelier ſenſations. — — But are not the one ſort as profitable and as needful as the other? Can we ever repreſent to ourſelves clearly and diſtinctly what is true and good and proper, ever approve it with conſideration or with feeling: can we ever think on God and his preſence with a quiet mind, or feel it more intimately, without being the better, the more tranquil, the happier for it? Or does pleaſure ceaſe to deſerve that name becauſe it does not ariſe to extaſy? Are ſerenity and peace not agreeable and deſirable, becauſe they do not break out into riotous mirth? — And if our exerciſes of devotion are at times unfruitful, and neither our mind nor our heart are ſtrongly and extraordinarily intereſted in them, will they not then and always be good and profitable to us, for the renewal of certain important, ſalutary ideas, principles, reſolutions, and for thus rendering them leſs liable to eſcape our apprehenſion.

If this occaſionally happen to you, chriſtians, ye who are honeſt and ſincere, who would fain glow with the fervour of devotion, would fain enjoy the ſublimeſt pleaſures of it, or have actually enjoyed them at other times: afflict not yourſelves at this caſual defect; impute it not to a criminal obduracy of your heart; let it not render you dejected and dismayed. The very diſquietude it cauſes you, the uneaſineſs you diſcover about it, are evident proofs that this kind of inſenſibility, or of leſs acute ſenſibility, is not a conſequence of your faulty behaviour,

but

but the effect of extrinsic accidental causes, or of the infirmity and limited powers of our nature. Expect therefore no more of devotion than it promises. It promises you profit, pleasure, joy; but not always the most manifest immediate profit, not always the most lively pleasure, not always a transporting joy. As various as are the natural dispositions, capacities and faculties, the constitution and temper, the outward circumstances of the devout; so different likewise are, not the essentials of devotion, but the force and degree of its effects upon them.

This leads me to a fourth consideration, which is neither less true nor of less importance. It is this; variation, relaxation, freedom, contribute much to the advancement of devotion. We must not slavishly bind ourselves to any prescribed rules; not be scrupulous followers of any pattern; not impose on ourselves any unnecessary laws; not require that the sentiments and sensations should follow each other in a certain predetermined order; not with an intentional solicitude, or with a mistaken conscientiousness, determine to undertake and to do first this and next that act of devotion, and not leave it till we have reached our aim and completed our design, or are forced to leave off by languor and fatigue. No, every human intellect has its own process, its peculiar train of thought; no other human intellect can serve it altogether for pattern and guide. And even the course our mind pursues of its own

election, is not always the ſame. At one time it is more diſpoſed to one way, and then to another, of exerting its powers: now more inclined to reflection and inveſtigation, then rather to contemplation and ſimple apprehenſion: now theſe, then thoſe religious doctrines, proſpects, concerns, hopes, are of moſt importance: at one time it can more readily comprehend a greater number of objects at once, than at another: at one time can take a loftier flight above viſible things than it is able to do at another.

The devout man has a ſpacious field before him, no leſs delightful than fertile, in which are numerous pleaſant walks that invite his ſteps, various beauties that he may contemplate, exquiſite fruits that he may enjoy. He cannot uſe, ſcan, enjoy them all at once, nor all indiſcriminately at every time. He now ſtrikes into this, then into that delightful path; now views one beautiful proſpect, then another: now the enjoyment of one ſort of well-flavoured fruit refreſhes and ſtrengthens him, at another time another. To ſpeak without a figure: the devout man betakes himſelf to retirement. Here he may propoſe various exerciſes of religion. He may employ himſelf in reading, or in meditation, or alternately in both: he can dwell more on his paſt conduct or on his preſent condition: he can reſign himſelf more to the admiration of the divine ſufficiency, or to ſentiments of the goodneſs and bounties of God; indulge more in adoration

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and praiſe, or in thankſgiving; more in laying open his own deſires and concerns with childlike frankneſs, or employ himſelf in affectionate interceſſion for his brethren: can exalt himſelf more in ſpirit to the inviſible God, or acquaint himſelf with his ſon and delegate Jeſus, our lord and king: can apply more to exerciſes of repentance, or faith, or love. The devout man cannot perform them all at once. To do them all in regular ſucceſſion, in a certain appointed ſeries, is a ſort of violence that militates both with the nature of man and the nature of devotion. He therefore does that to which his heart, or the ſentiment of any particular want, or a particular occaſion, induces and impels him; he even quickly paſſes from one to another; by no means endeavours to force any ſentiment; but rather gives free ſcope to his devout aſpirations and thoughts; and at all times enjoys that pleaſure which ſolicits him, and in the manner in which it offers; and thus the pleaſure of devotion ever retains its value, acquires new charms, multiplies to infinity and never allows enjoyment to turn into diſguſt.

Chriſtians, ye who are deſirous of experiencing this, obſerve the rules I have now delivered. Learn to form juſt and worthy conceptions of God and your relations towards him; learn to know and to revere him as eſſential love; render theſe reflections familiar to your mind; let them continually be preſent with you; aſſimilate them ever cloſer and cloſer with whatever you ſee and hear, whatever you think

and do, whatever you ſuffer and enjoy; — require not always the ſuperlative degree of ſpiritual pleaſure and of pious joy; afflict not yourſelves at thoſe imperfections and infirmities and limitations which you have in common with all, even the beſt of men; — lay no unneceſſary reſtraint upon yourſelves; introduce a greater variety into your exerciſes of devotion; and avail yourſelves of every kind of chriſtian freedom: ſo will devotion moſt certainly be to you what it is to all its votaries and friends; the nobleſt application of our ſuperior faculties; the firmeſt ground of a cheerful temper and a virtuous conduct; the ſtrength and ſuſtenance of our ſpirit: the joy of our ſolitary and the comfort of our gloomy hours; the moſt direct and bleſſed means of having fellowſhip with God and with his ſon Jeſus; the neareſt way, the beſt preparative, to higher perfection; the ſweeteſt foretaſte of our better and happier life hereafter! This is the true chriſtian devotion; and ſuch may it be to you and ever more efficient and complete from day to day! Amen.

SERMON XI.

The Value of Senſibility.

GOD, creator of our mind and heart, eternal fount of being, of ſenſation, of thought, how great the capacities and powers with which thou haſt endowed our mind and our heart! What ſources of knowledge and pleaſure, of perfection and happineſs haſt thou opened to us in both! In what a profitable and bleſſed connection with the viſible and the inviſible world placed us by both! If thou impart to us light for diſcovering the truth and for diſcriminating it from vain ſemblance and deceit; thou giveſt us alſo life and vigour to apprehend and to retain it and willingly to follow its dictates. If thou ſhew us through our underſtanding, the way we ſhould go for attaining the proper end of our being; thou doſt alſo warm and inflame our heart to enter on that way, and to purſue it to the mark. Thrice happy we, in being that for which thy wiſe benignity has made us; that we are ſenſible and thinking beings; that, though related on one ſide with

the beaſts of the field, yet we have affinity with the angels, with thy ſon and expreſs image Jeſus Chriſt! Oh then might we ſo regard and uſe the ſeveral capacities and powers of our nature, as is agreeable to thy will and to their appointment, never neglecting or abuſing the one to the detriment of the other; and by the beſt uſe of them all, become as perfect and as happy as it is poſſible for mankind to be! Might then our mind and our heart be ever in uniſon together and with the rules of truth and order, and both glorify thee, their creator and preſerver! Bleſs then to the promotion of theſe views our reflections on thoſe leſſons of wiſdom that are now to be delivered to us! Strengthen our attention on them; enable us to feel their importance and their truth and to make them the guide of our judgments and the rule of our conduct. Incline us to look up to the complete pattern of thy beloved ſon, that we may arrive at ſome faint reſemblance of the deity, by aſpiring at the perfection of humanity. Accept this humble act of duty and obedience, which we offer in the moſt holy name of Jeſus our lord and ſaviour, concluding with filial confidence as his votaries in the words which he himſelf preſcribed us: Our father, &c.

GEN. xlv. 3, 4.

And Joſeph ſaid unto his brethren, I am Joſeph. Doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not anſwer him: for they were troubled at his preſence. And Joſeph ſaid unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you; and they came near; and he ſaid: I am Joſeph, your brother, whom ye ſold into Ægypt.

THE teacher of religion, teachers, like all other ſhould apply himſelf to the wants of his hearers and diſciples. He ſhould diſcourſe to them in the language moſt intelligible to them; ſhould rectify ſuch of their opinions as ſtand moſt in need of it; and touch upon ſuch faults as moſt frequently and moſt eaſily gain the aſcendancy over them. And when it happens that more is thought and ſpoken of certain matters than uſual, and this in words or expreſſions, the ſignification whereof is yet fluctuating and unſettled, he ought not to let it eſcape his attention, nor exclude it from his diſcourſes and leſſons, whenever the ſubject is of the moral kind, and has or may have an influence on the conduct and the happineſs of his hearers. Such, my devout audience, I take to be the caſe with ſenſibility; a ſubject greatly talked of at preſent, and a word much oftener uſed than rightly underſtood. And as this is a matter which may produce much

good and much harm, occaſion much happineſs and much miſery, methinks I need no farther apology for attempting to admoniſh you on the ſubject, and to caution you againſt the abuſe of it.

In this deſign I have read to you a paſſage from the hiſtory of Joſeph, wherein his character is depicted as fraught with ſenſibility. The ſtrongeſt emotions of love, of tenderneſs, of the nobleſt generoſity, ſo poſſeſs and overwhelm his ſoul, that he burſts into tears, on diſcovering himſelf to his brethren. The vaſt eminence and authority with which he was inveſted, as the deliverer of Ægypt and the viceroy of its king, could neither ſuppreſs nor abate in his ſoul the warmeſt emotions of filial and fraternal affection, nor prevent the natural demonſtrations of them. He felt in all its force the pure and innocent delight a man enjoys in the boſom of his family, the uncommon good fortune of finding loſt friends, and the ſtill greater ſatisfaction of forgiving the injurious, of comforting the afflicted and of reviving the diſconſolate; and preferred this pleaſure and this ſatisfaction, to all the ſplendour and all the feſtivity accompanying his preſent elevated condition. "I am Joſeph, your brother. Doth my father yet live? Come near to me." And now, be not uneaſy; nor think me angry that ye ſold me hither, for it is God's doing, and he doth all things well. I eſteem myſelf happy, that I am able to preſerve and provide for you and yours! — Who can here fail of recognizing the language of the

the heart, the moſt generous, the moſt tender and ſuſceptible heart!

But here we are not to ſtop. Our deſign is to conſider and illuſtrate the ſubject in all its latitude; as far as is practicable in a diſcourſe of this nature. In this view we ſhall have three queſtions to diſcuſs. The firſt is, What is ſenſibility? The ſecond, What is true, generous, laudable ſenſibility? And the third, What is falſe and blameable ſenſibility?

For acquiring a true notion of ſenſibility, my pious hearers, we ſhould take care not to confound it with irritability *, or hold them abſolutely for one and the ſame. When we are eaſily affected either by the external objects which we ſee and hear and apprehend; or by the ideas we form of abſent, and viſible, intellectual objects; or by the images which our fancy or inventive faculty holds up to us, of mere poſſibilities or of actual exiſtences; when the agreeable or diſagreeable impreſſions which either of them make upon us ſink deep, and eaſily and ſuddenly ſeize upon our whole ſenſitive

* I am well aware that the word *irritability* principally and almoſt excluſively is uſed of the character of a man who is very eaſily offended, quickly and deeply reſenting every affront by calling the real or ſuppoſed aggreſſor to a ſevere account. I here employ the term in a much larger ſenſe, for denoting that feature of the human character which is frequently confounded with ſenſibility, as coming neareſt to it, and yet is not real ſenſibility. As we are in want of a word for marking this diſtinction, and knowing of no one more ſuitable; I was under the neceſſity of uſing it in a rather unuſual ſignification. Indeed *irritable* and its derivatives ſhould ſeem as proper in the former caſe.

faculty,

faculty, eaſily and ſuddenly move us to joy or to ſorrow, to weeping or to laughter, to love or to hatred, to zeal or to anger, to tranſports of delight, or to the deepeſt dejection; we are then acutely ſenſitive: and, when this irritability is dignified and heightened; when it chiefly diſplays itſelf in regard to moral objects, to more refined beauties, and to ſublimer pleaſures; whenever it ſharpens our ſentiments of what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, becoming and unbecoming, generous and ungenerous; and makes us readily obſerve and acutely feel this difference in ſuch things, perſons, actions, occurences, wherein the generality of mankind will not perceive and feel it,—then are we ſenſible. A few antithetical exemplifications will ſet this matter in a more perſpicuous light. The merely irritable man is rather moved by the ſurface and the exterior of the ſubject; the man of ſenſibility rather by its intrinſic qualities and real dignity: the former is particularly apt to be ſtimulated to diſpleaſure and to anger; the other is more capable of all, and chiefly the gentler, nobler kinds of emotion; the former is rather agitated by ſtrong violent impreſſions; the latter rather ſoftened and pervaded by the milder and more gentle: the former is rather affected by the grand, the extraordinary, the ſtriking; the latter rather by the delicate, the noble, the unobſerved and deſpiſed beautiful and good. The irritable man quickly takes fire at the injury he receives or is offered; the man of

ſenſibility

ſenſibility is troubled likewiſe on account of the injury his enemy is doing to himſelf, and the ſtings he is preparing ſooner or later for his own heart. The irritable man is more frequently moved to ſympathy by the loud complaints and the copious tears of the unhappy; the man of ſenſibility alſo takes part in all even the ſilent expreſſions of pain, of uneaſineſs, of want which he obſerves in any creature. The irritable man is fond rather of noiſy, tumultuous pleaſures and amuſements; the man of ſenſibility ſeeks moſt the charms of quiet, domeſtic, gentle ſatisfactions. The irritable man rejoices in the kind act of the philanthropiſt and the patriot; the man of ſenſibility is likewiſe delighted in the tears that ſtand in the eyes of the youth, when hearing of noble deeds, which he wiſhes to have done himſelf. The irritable man is full of feeling towards whatever has a viſible and proximate influence on the welfare of himſelf and his; the man of ſenſibility is alſo affected by the remoter and more latent conſequences of things; and nothing is totally foreign to him, nothing indifferent, that relates to any living being capable of feeling and of happineſs. In ſhort, ſenſibility is enlarged, refined dignified irritability; it is partly a higher degree, partly a peculiar direction or determination partly a nobler application and expoſition of it.

Now, if irritability be in itſelf a real and deſirable prerogative of man, then ſenſibility muſt be

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as much ſo and more. But, as the former may be ſometimes rightly employed, ſometimes abuſed, and therefore ſometimes uſeful, at others hurtful, to mankind, ſo likewiſe it fares with the latter. There is a genuine and a ſpurious, a laudable and a culpable, an innocent and a dangerous ſenſibility. Let us ſee wherein they both conſiſt, and whereby they may be diſcriminated from each other.

Our ſenſibility is in the firſt place of the right kind, it is generous and honourable, when directed to the beſt and worthieſt objects. There are undoubtedly certain objects that never can make too ſtrong an impreſſion on us, never too much affect us, in regard to which we can never too intenſely feel: and theſe are God, truth, innocence, virtue, human perfection and happineſs; all that is beautiful and great and good and honourable and amiable and endureth for ever. Therefore, if thou never think, o man, without profound reverence and filial love, on God, thy creator and father; if thou never conſider his works without joyous aſtoniſhment, a genial enlargement of thy heart, and admire the traces of his wiſdom and goodneſs in the ſmaller as well as in the larger works of his creation; if never without tranſport thou lift up thine eyes to his magnificent heavens, or behold the numberleſs beauties of the earth, which he has allotted thee for thy dwelling; if, never without inward delight, thou enjoy his bene-

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factions and bleſſings, or reflect on his bounties and bleſſings; if, when thou ſeeſt thy fellow-creatures, thy brethren, and walkeſt and converſeſt with them, thou art never devoid of real intereſt in them; if thou art never deſtitute of inward ſatisfaction when thou art the witneſs of a good and generous deed, or obſerveſt the victory of truth over error, and of virtue over vice; nor feeſt the triumph of unrighteouſneſs and iniquity without indignation, nor tyranny of any kind without the livelieſt diſpleaſure; nor ſuffering or corrupted innocence without deep concern; nor the ruin and miſery of thy fellow-creatures without actual ſorrow; if thou never hear the voice of nature, of truth, of graceful ſimplicity, without pleaſure and delight, never the cry of the needy without hearty compaſſion, never the ſighs of the deſtitute and afflicted without pain and grief; in ſhort, if thou perform every act of private and public worſhip with a truly tender and ſenſible heart, pray with real fervour, apprehend the whole value and the whole dignity of thy connection with God and with his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, art thoroughly warmed and penetrated with love to thy ſaviour, and thy exerciſes of devotion fill and bleſs thee with feelings which thy heart is ſcarcely able to contain: then is thy ſenſibility directed to objects and employed on objects that are worthy of it. Then is it of the nobleſt kind, then does it turn to thy higheſt advantage, and is the ſource of perfection and happineſs

neſs to thyſelf and to others, for the preſent and for the future world.

Our ſenſibility is farther of the proper ſort; it is blameleſs, and a real prerogative of man, when under the guidance and controul of reaſon. Sentiment, and therefore likewiſe ſenſibility, my pious hearers, cannot be a ſafe guide to us on all occaſions. It is apt to bias us too eaſily and too violently for or againſt a matter or a perſon; frequently ſoftens us too much where we ought to be firm and immoveable; it diſpoſes us too often, from lenity and favour, to be unjuſt towards one perſon, and too ſevere againſt another; too often prepoſſeſſes us from mere animal ſympathy in behalf of the diſtreſſed, and hardens us againſt the proſperous. It judges too often with partiality; abides too obſtinately by the firſt impreſſions made upon the heart; and allows itſelf too eaſily to be cheated by the appearances of the beautiful and good, by engaging forms, by moving words and geſtures. And how many are there who, regarding this otherwiſe reſpectable quality as a weakneſs, treat it accordingly, and are expert in taking advantage of it by a thouſand different means, and artfully contrive to render it ſubſervient to their diſhoneſt purpoſes! How neceſſary is it therefore that it ſhould be conſtantly under the controul of reaſon, that it ſhould have a clear well-regulated underſtanding for its guide, leſt we ſhould be continually falling into error, leſt it ſhould prove more hurtful than profitable

profitable to ourſelves and to others! How many perſons of ſenſibility have brought miſery on themſelves and others, or plunged themſelves into no ſmall ſtraights and difficulties, by not hearkening to the admonitions and remonſtrances of this prudent monitor, and by ſcornfully diſcarding reaſon as too cold, too tedious, too intereſted a companion and friend! No, that ſhould be the regulator of our mind, the governour of our conduct; to this end the creator beſtowed it upon us, and it is the true, the grand prerogative of man, as a rational creature. It is that which ſhould teach us to diſcriminate ſemblance from reality, to ſacrifice even our beſt propenſities to the performance of duty, to act, not by fortuitous and tranſient ſenſations, but upon fixt and immutable principles, and to controul and govern ourſelves, though the conflict coſt never ſo much trouble to our heart. Happy the man, who is thus taught of reaſon; with whom light and warmth are in due proportion, whoſe underſtanding is as unclouded as his heart is tender.

In ſhort, our ſenſibility is of the proper caſt, it is innocent and reſpectable, when it properly incites us to good, to the beſt and moſt generous actions. To feel, to feel acutely, and yet not to act correſpondently with our feelings, in general betrays great weakneſs and effeminacy. To be ſenſible to good, and yet not perform that good, when we can and ought, is inconſiſtency and hypocriſy.

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To deem good ſentiments an equivalent for good actions, is impoſture and ſelf-deceit. Few of our emotions, my pious hearers, are final ends; the generality are and ſhould be no more than means, inducements, incentives, to put us in motion, to facilitate the application and exertion of our faculties, and thus to aſſiſt us in overcoming many concomitant difficulties or dangers. What is the moſt enraptured admiration of the beautiful and the good, unleſs it rouze us to the imitation of it? What is the moſt poignant compaſſion, unleſs it excite us to effectual and timely relief? What is the livelieſt diſpleaſure, the moſt righteous zeal, unleſs it prompt us to the prevention of injuſtice, to the defence of the oppreſſed, to a reſolute vindication of the cauſe of truth, and infuſe courage and ſtrength into the heart of the innocent? Of what uſe are ſighs and tears and lamentations, if, when we ought to be acting and working, aſſiſting others by counſel or deeds, they leave us irreſolute and motionleſs? What is the moſt paſſionate and tender affection, unleſs it ſhew itſelf by actions? No, if we would have our ſenſibility of the proper kind, laudable and ſuch as will encourage and embelliſh virtue; we muſt never ſo far ſubmit to it, as to let it exhauſt our faculties, or deprive us of all power to act. No, it ſhould much rather impel us by an irreſiſtible energy to all good and generous exploits; obviate all conſiderations which might detain us from them; ſecure us from any

hurtful delay; repel every objection on the part of indolence and eaſe; fortify us againſt all dread of difficulty and danger; and urge us to well-doing with as much zeal, as we have deeply felt the propriety of it: and the more active it renders us in theſe reſpects, the more reſpectable and honourable it is.

And this, my pious hearers, this is true, irreproachable, virtuous ſenſibility; which no man, who has a ſound apprehenſion, and whoſe heart is not totally hardened, will venture to cenſure or to deſpiſe; which every man, who knows the value of things, muſt revere as a precious boon of the Moſt High, as a real prerogative of man. The caſe is quite otherwiſe with falſe ſenſibility. We need only to examine it a little for diſcovering it to be culpable and hurtful.

Senſibility is in the firſt place falſe, is culpable, when it is not natural, but forced; when a man expreſſes and pretends to feelings which he has not, or ſtrives to appear to have them in a far higher degree than he actually has: thus playing the part of a deſponding, a perfectly inconſolable man, while he is no more than moderately troubled and grieved; or falſely pretending to enjoy celeſtial tranſports and rapturous delights, when he only enjoys an ordinary pleaſure and a calm ſatisfaction in any particular object. Since our ſenſations do not always depend upon ourſelves, are not always in our power; ſince no man, in every inſtant of his

life and in every temperament of his body, is alike ſuſceptible of the ſame degree of irritability; ſince neither mind nor body is always able to endure an equally ſtrong tenſion and concuſſion: ſo none need be aſhamed either of a deficiency of theſe ſtronger ſenſations, or of the caſual relaxation of them. Indeed he that is always inſenſible, always unfeeling, whom nothing can move, is in no deſirable condition; and is criminal, if he have brought himſelf into it by folly and vice. But even the moſt ſenſible man is not always in a like mood; even the greateſt admirer of the works of nature has not his view always ſtruck by them in the ſame manner; even upon the tendereſt heart, ideas of the diſtreſs and miſery of a fellow-creature do not always make the ſame impreſſion. Whoever but approves the true, the beautiful, the good, and does that which he reckons his duty, need never be under any uneaſineſs though he ſedately approve and perform it at times, without any remarkably ſtrong emotion. Whereas he that reſolves to exhibit the ſame ſenſations in every event, and to feel in one circumſtance in the ſame manner and degree as in another, for the ſake of being reputed a man of extraordinary ſenſibility, among thoſe with whom he is intimately connected by a uniformity of ſentiments and purſuits, muſt frequently play the hypocrite, muſt often lie, muſt often ſpeak and act in an unnatural manner: and no kind of diſſimulation and affectation more eaſily

betrays itſelf, none makes a more diſagreeable impreſſion on thoſe that ſee it and hear it, than this. Emotions totally incongruous will frequently be exhibited at the ſame time; ſometimes the aid of the moſt prepoſterous geſticulations and motions of the body will be called in; frequently all the energetical and moving expreſſions of language will be heaped on one another without judgment or choice; and many performances of this nature end in the ſneers and deriſion of the ſpectators.

Farther, ſenſibility is falſe and culpable, when it is overſtrained or exceſſive; when it is diſproportionate to the worth of the object; when it is more diſplayed in trifles than in matters of importance. Many will hear the account of the demolition of a city by the ſhocks of an earthquake, of a fleet daſhed to pieces upon rocks, of an army deſtroyed by fire and ſword, with all the indifferency imaginable, who can ſhed tears over a comparatively inſignificant creature of the claſſes of plants or animals. On numbers, a whole life ſpent in toilſome, virtuous actions, but performed in ſilence, without any rumour or oſtentation, makes no impreſſion, who will fall into tranſports and extacy at an act of humanity or beneficence, accidentally perhaps performed by another, but with great formality, and diſplayed with much oſtentation. Many are ſcarcely moved, or even not at all, at indications of courage, fortitude of mind, reſolution, invincible patience and firmneſs; while, at any aſſiduity that ſhews tenderneſs or love, even though it be not

perfectly innocent, they find reaſon to be moved beyond meaſure. The man of ſenſibility, in the beſt and nobleſt ſenſe of the term, finds indeed matter for his ſenſibility to work upon in a thouſand events and ſubjects, where others would be abſolutely cold, which in their eyes would be inſignificant trifles; and it is by no means deſerving of reproach if a flower or a little inſect move him, if he obſerve any expreſſion of exultation or ſuffering in ſome ſenſitive creature, that he be affected by it, if he take a ſenſible intereſt in it: but he does not therefore overlook great and important concernments, is not cold towards them, takes ſtill more intereſt in them, is ſtill more ſtrongly moved by them, never has recourſe to grimace, but conſtantly preſerves the dignity of a thinking, rational, ſelf-poſſeſſing man; and this is a proof that his way of thinking and feeling is not inſipid affectation, but true, generous ſenſibility.

Senſibility is thirdly ſpurious and blameable, when it is injurious or dangerous to ourſelves and others; hinders us in our poſitive duties, or renders the performance of them diſagreeable and difficult; when it deprives us of the deſire and the ability to do what is right and expedient. He that ſuffers himſelf to be moved and overpowered at the expreſſion of violent pain, at the ſight of ſufferings and miſery, ſo as to be quite confuſed, to loſe all power of reflection and preſence of mind, and to be incapable of attending to the means, and to the application of the means by which that pain may be

be eaſed, thoſe ſufferings mitigated, that miſery removed or aſſuaged; he that only weeps and laments, where he can and ſhould relieve: his ſenſibility is hurtful, is culpable; and, though it be never ſo natural, is a diſeaſe of the ſoul, an infirmity of mind, which can never be honourable in a man, which he ought not to encourage, but ſhould ſtrive and guard againſt with all poſſible care.

Senſibility is again noxious and conſequently criminal, when it renders us negligent in regard to others, and forgetful of the duties we owe them; when it deprives us of the reliſh for our ordinary affairs, diverts us from the proſecution of them, or induces us to go about them with diſlike and averſion. It is therefore hurtful, when a miſtreſs of a family allows it to be an impediment to her in the careful management of her domeſtic affairs, in the maintenance of regularity and order in the ſeveral departments of her œconomy, in her diligent endeavours to promote the welfare and ſatisfaction of her family, in her attention to ſmall things as well as to great; when ſhe chuſes rather to indulge her ſenſibility in reading, or in converſing with acquaintances of the ſame tender and delicate feelings, than addict herſelf to family and œconomical affairs; or will only extend her influence and inſpection in general over the whole, as if that could ſubſiſt without its parts, and the greater without the leſs.

Senſibility is pernicious and criminal; when the youth, when the man of buſineſs, is induced by it

to think the concerns of his trade or vocation unworthy of him, and which perhaps are not very elegant and important in themſelves, or not highly entertaining, and thereupon to deſpiſe and neglect them, and to imagine that he degrades himſelf by paying attention to them, and by doing only ſuch things as thouſands of others of leſs delicate ſentiments and of a leſs elevated mind, can perform as well as he. It is pernicious, when the diſciple of wiſdom, ſeduced by this propenſity of his heart, neglects the due cultivation of his underſtanding and reaſon, and refuſes himſelf to ſerious and dry ſtudies, though of the utmoſt importance for acquiring ſuch knowledge and ſuch ſciences, as are indiſpenſably neceſſary to his future profeſſion or ſtation in life.

Senſibility is hurtful and criminal when it leads us to refrain from aſſociating with others, to deny them the duties of converſation, affability, friendly eſteem and affection, becauſe they are not endowed with ſuch a nice ſenſibility as ourſelves; nature having probably formed them of coarſer materials, or deſigned them more for cool and temperate reflection, more for calm conſideration, and diſpoſed them rather to action than to ſentiment.

Laſtly, ſenſibility is hurtful and dangerous, when, miſled by its inſpirations and impulſes, we dream of a world, and live and float in a world, which has hardly any thing in common with the actual ſtate of things, which exiſts only in our imagination, or in certain poems and works of fancy;

fancy; when beguiled by such representations and images, we look for perfection in others, and expect matters from them, which are either nowhere, or very rarely, to be found; and then trouble and afflict ourselves at this natural defect, and keep aloof from them, as if we missed some essential qualities in them. How many has this prevented from making suitable and advantageous connections; how many has it misled to pass their days in a state of celibacy! How many have thereby become bad husbands, selfish, morose, querulous, untractable companions, downright misanthropists! No, the wise man sees, accepts, uses the things of this world as they are, and looks for no angels among mankind, no paradise upon the earth, no virtue free from alloy among frail sinful creatures, no perfection there, where it is not to be found.

No, in all these instances where we have pronounced sensibility to be hurtful and criminal, we sacrifice duty to pleasure; render ourselves indispos'd and unfit for the performance of our duty; perform it negligently; disturb the harmony and welfare of society; counteract the designs of God and our own nature, by which we are ordained, not only to feel, but also to think and still more to act; we enervate our taste and our heart; weaken our faculties; become fastidious in the enjoyment of the beautiful and the good; seldom satisfied with what is and what happens; and prepare for ourselves and others a thousand sufferings and a thou-

ſand woes, from which in the contrary caſe we ſhould be totally exempt.

Guard yourſelves, therefore, my dear friends, againſt this falſe, extravagant, pernicious ſenſibility. Suffer me to recommend to you in this reſpect moderation and ſelf-command. And, as you are chriſtians, look likewiſe here to Jeſus, your leader and guide, the great pattern of all human perfection. How ſenſible was his heart; and how generous, how buſied, was his ſenſibility; how fruitful in good works! Whoſe ſoul was ever ſo thoroughly imbued with love towards God and man, with the love of truth and virtue, as his; and what harmony in all, mind and heart, words and works! He pitied the people, he compaſſionated their ſpiritual and corporeal wants; but at the ſame time he gave them effectual relief; he fed, he taught them. He wept, when he ſaw his friend Lazarus in the grave; but he awakened him from the dead. He felt and ſuffered the ſickneſs and pains of the wretched, and he healed them. He careſſed the little children that were brought to him, and bleſſed them. He viewed with affection the young man who wanted to follow him, though his wiſhes were not brought to effect. He ſhed tears over Jeruſalem, while it was watching his motions with a murderous intent. He implored pardon for his tormentors; and neglected himſelf whenever he had an opportunity of ſerving and helping others. And what a lively concern does he take in the welfare of his relations in the moſt calamitous moment

moment of his life! "Behold," ſaid he from the croſs to his favourite diſciple, "behold thy "mother!" And to Mary, "Behold thy ſon!" —But how active was his whole life in all theſe reſpects! How unremitted his ardour in right-couſneſs and beneficence, in finiſhing the work that was given him to do! How clear and unclouded his intellect! How impartial his judgment! How intrepid his fortitude! How juſt and firm his principles! How great his indulgence to his diſciples and ſcholars, who were ſo much leſs ſenſible than he, who at times were almoſt totally inſenſible! How manly in ſhort was his language and his whole behaviour! How far from affectation and artifice, from all oſtentation! How ſuited to his character, his vocation and to temporary circumſtances! What noiſeleſs, tranquil dignity appeared in all he uttered, and in all he did!

Oh imitate him likewiſe in this, all ye who have the happineſs and the honour to be his confeſſors. Strive ever upwards to the perfection of your nature with all the faculties of your ſoul. Attend to your mind as well as to your heart; cultivate the one with no leſs care than the other; learn to think as juſtly as you feel intenſely. Let reaſon and ſenſibility go hand in hand with you along the path of life, let this be governed and directed by that, and that be encouraged and animated by this, that you may never want light, for avoiding all deviation and error, nor warmth and energy for purſuing reſolutely and indefatigably the right way.

SERMON XII.

The Value of Virtue.

GOD, our creator and our father, thou haſt inſcribed thy law, the law of truth and order on our hearts, endowed us with an inward ſenſe of what is right and convenient; thus intending to lead us to virtue, and by virtue to happineſs. Merciful Father! of what perfection, of what joy, of what bliſs haſt thou made us ſuſceptible, by having called and ordained us to virtue, and having rendered it ſo venerable to us, and by having given and ſtill continuing to give us the capacity of becoming, from ſenſual, corrupted creatures, wiſe and virtuous men, and of ever becoming more completely ſuch! Oh that we were all what thou wouldſt have us to be — that we all ſought our greateſt pre-eminence, our higheſt dignity in virtue — ſubmitted ourſelves entirely to her gentle ſway, ſuffered ourſelves to be entirely actuated and governed by her, and thereby ever brought ourſelves nearer to thee, the eternal ſount of goodneſs and perfection! How bleſſed

ſhould

ſhould we then be even here, and how much more bleſſed hereafter! and with what complacency couldſt thou then look down upon us, thy children, and take thy pleaſure in us! Oh might then virtue preſent herſelf to our mind in all her beauty, in all her irreſiſtible attractions; cauſe us thoroughly to feel her pre-eminence above all that we elſe eſteem and revere, and ſo take poſſeſſion of our whole heart, our moſt cordial attachment! Irradiate our minds with thy pure light, o God! and quicken us with thy good ſpirit, that we may judge rightly of the value of things and learn wiſely to chuſe between them. To this end accompany with thy bleſſing the diſcourſe that is now intended to conduct and encourage us thereto. Let not the preacher recommend and extol virtue to us in vain, cauſe him to feel her worth himſelf, and ſo impart to us thoſe feelings, that the number and the zeal of her votaries may be augmented among us. We implore it of thee as the devoted ſervants of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee further in his name and words: Our father, &c.

PROV. viii. 11.

Wiſdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be deſired are not to be compared to it.

TO deſpiſe virtue, and not to prize it enough, are two very different things. The former is a fault, of which but few are guilty; the latter an error which great numbers of perſons fall into. Virtue, my pious hearers, is of ſo harmleſs, ſo venerable, ſo captivating an aſpect; ſhe leaves us ſo little to fear, and allows us to hope for ſo much from thoſe with whom we perceive her, and by whom we ſee her act and operate; her ſentiments and her conduct are ſo juſt, ſo harmonious, ſo natural and ſimple; her connection with our happineſs and with the welfare of the whole community, is in moſt caſes, at leaſt in many, ſo apparent; ſhe is frequently ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary; is conſtantly ſo beautiful; holds out ſo much lenity and patience to the frail and feeble: that neither great ſagacity, nor erudition, nor habitual reflection, nor a ſuperior degree of perſonal excellence, are requiſite for allowing her a certain value, for acknowledging her to be ſomething good and reſpectable, and for ſhewing her more or leſs eſteem. The wiſe and the ignorant, the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious, the conſiderate man and the volatile youth, are

are all agreed in this general judgment on the value of virtue; and none will venture, unleſs he be under the deceitful influence of ſome headſtrong paſſion, plainly and in direct terms to deſpiſe her. Wherever conſcience, wherever the ſentiment of truth and goodneſs ſtill remains in man, there virtue finds an advocate in the hearts of her enemies as well as of her friends, who dare not directly condemn her.

But, certain as this is, my pious hearers, it is no leſs certain, that all men do not, that probably only the leaſt part of mankind acknowledge the whole value of virtue, and ſo highly prize, and ſo inwardly revere her, as ſhe deſerves. The reverence ſhewn to virtue is with great numbers, rather prepoſſeſſion, or obſcure ſenſation, than vital evident knowledge, real ſentiment, or firm internal conviction. They have a reſpect perhaps for virtue in the abſtract and in general; but not as it appears in every particular incident, and every particular perſon. They may hold it indeed to be ſomething good and deſirable; but they ſeldom, upon mature conſideration and in a decided manner, give it the preference to all other good and deſirable things. But ſeldom are we thoroughly perſuaded from ſincere conviction, that we ſhould not part with it on any account, that we can never purchaſe it at too dear a rate, nor make too coſtly ſacrifices to it; that with it we poſſeſs all things, and without it nothing; that it is infinitely better to be poor and

mean,

mean and unlearned and deſpiſed, but virtuous, than to be rich and mighty and honoured and learned, but not virtuous. And yet all our pretences to real virtue are idle and baſeleſs, ſo long as we do not believe and confeſs this truth, ſo long as we do not prefer it before every other advantage of life, however eſtimable and excellent.

To ſettle your judgment on this matter, my pious hearers, and to increaſe your reverence for virtue, is the deſign of my preſent diſcourſe. In ſeveral foregoing diſcourſes we have laid before you the value of riches, of honour, of ſenſual pleaſure and of intellectual pleaſures; pronounced them all, as they really are, to be actual goods, to be objects which in a certain degree deſerve to be eſteemed, admired, ſought after and enjoyed; to be things, which, according to the uſe we make of them, may contribute more or leſs to our perfection and happineſs. Uſeful and valuable however as all theſe things unqueſtionably are, virtue is ſtill far preferable to them, as far as the end is to the means, and as a ſtately edifice is preferable to the ſcaffoldings and implements neceſſary to its conſtruction.

Wiſdom, ſays the wiſe king, in our text, "Wiſdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be deſired are not to be compared to it." Wiſdom, my pious hearers, in this paſſage is not ſimply that which we otherwiſe call underſtanding, knowledge, erudition, or profound ſagacity. It is the proper uſe of the underſtanding in all the affairs and

and tranſactions of mankind; the right application of the knowledge and ſagacity we poſſeſs, to the promoting of our felicity; it is an intelligent conduct in harmony with truth and order; in ſhort, it is, in ſignification, exactly the ſame as what in our language we call Virtue. This wiſdom, this virtue, is more precious than rubies; all that we can poſſibly deſire is not to be compared to it: that is, its value is ſuperior to the value of all other things which it is uſual for mankind moſt paſſionately to deſire, and moſt earneſtly to purſue. And this is the ſubject we intend now circumſtantially to illuſtrate and prove.

In this deſign we have two queſtions to anſwer. The firſt, What is Virtue? The ſecond, Whence does it acquire its pre-eminent value?

Virtue, my pious hearers, does not conſiſt in detached and ſingle acts of goodneſs. Neither temperance, nor chaſtity, nor juſtice, nor beneficence, gives us the idea of what virtue is, and what it implies. Theſe are no more than the ſeveral ways in which it is diſplayed, the effects of its operation. It is the foundation, the ſource of theſe and all other good actions. That the eye ſees without obſtruction, that the ear without difficulty hears, that every organ of ſenſe receives the impreſſion of external objects, that every limb and member of the body performs its functions with regularity and eaſe, does not conſtitute the eſſence of health: they are only the various effects and indications of it. Health conſiſts

conſiſts in the juſt and proper relations of all the parts, all the veſſels and juices of our whole body to one another, and in the unabated freedom of action in the vital energy which pervades and preſerves and ſets them all in motion.

Virtue, in like manner, conſiſts not in particular good ſentiments and diſpoſitions. That we find a pleaſure in beneficence; that we are prompt to reflect on ſerious ſubjects, on the doctrines of religion for inſtance; that we heartily love and are apt to promote peace and concord; that we are more diſpoſed to think well than ill of our fellow-creatures: theſe are all good diſpoſitions, in which the virtuous perſon cannot be deficient; but none of theſe diſpoſitions alone, nor even ſeveral of them together, render us truly virtuous, or conſtitute the diſtinctive eſſence of real virtue.

No, my pious hearers, virtue is an aggregate, an indiviſible whole. It is not ſo much action, as principle of action; not ſo much ſentiment, as principle of ſentiment; it impels us to thoſe good actions, and inſpires us with theſe good ſentiments. Animated and governed by it, we will and do what is good and all kinds of good; will it with energy and deciſion and practiſe it heartily and firmly. It is in effect the habitual frame of our mind, the direction and application of its faculties, cauſing us conſtantly to think, to be inclined, and to act, in conformity to truth, to order, to the will of God. It conſiſts in a general, prevalent, effective inclination to whatever

whatever is true and right and expedient, ſuitable to our nature and our relative ſituations, and the nature and relations of other things, in the conſtant readineſs to do or not to do, to ſuffer or to bear, to be and to have, or not to be and not to have, what God will have us to do or not to do, to bear or to ſuffer, to be and to have, or not to be and not to have. It conſiſts in the truth of our reflections, our feelings, our deſires, our words and works, in the harmony of all the parts of our inward and outward conduct among themſelves and with the law of God. It is therefore preciſely what we commonly term the love and practice of goodneſs, a prompt and unlimited obedience towards God and his commandments, or, in one word, integrity. It is the health and the true life of the ſoul, the ſtate in which our mind is and does what it ought to be and to do, according to its proper deſtination; the energy which conſtantly impels us to all that is fair and good and generous and uſeful, to whatever is agreeable to God and promotes the perfection and happineſs of man, — repleniſhes us with good-will to all mankind, and induces us to live and act more for others than for ourſelves, and to employ whatever we are and have in the moſt uſeful manner.

Now ſuch a virtue, we repeat it, is of more value than all the other goods, the value whereof we have hitherto been weighing and aſcertaining in ſeveral diſcourſes; of more value than riches, than honour, than ſenſual pleaſure, more than all the advantages

and pleaſures of the mind, in ſo far as they are at variance with virtue, or independent thereon. The following remarks will ſet this matter in its proper light, and render it evident.

Firſt, Virtue is abſolutely and without all limitation good, abſolutely and without all limitation or exception uſeful and deſirable. This we cannot pronounce of any other good, though in itſelf and under certain conditions never ſo eſtimable. Riches may be a ſnare to us, honours a burden, ſenſual pleaſure a ſource of trouble and pain; they all may lead us into ſin and vice and thereby plunge us into miſery. Even the endowments of the mind, knowledge and ſcience, wit and ſagacity, and the ſuperior pleaſure they produce, may be miſapplied in a thouſand ways, in a thouſand ways become hurtful and ruinous to ourſelves and others. Neither outward wealth nor internal energy of mind can ſhield the unwiſe from folly, or the vicious from miſery. Virtue alone can never be miſapplied, can never be criminal: for we can never be too virtuous; never too faithful, too juſt, or think and act too well; never enjoy the pleaſure of virtue too often and too conſtantly, never neglect duties for the enjoyment of it. No one virtue militates againſt another; none is an impediment to the practice of another; none leſſens our affection or weakens our abilities for another. Properly, as I have already obſerved, there is but one virtue, and that is, the predominant unchangeable readineſs and aptitude to do that which

which is lawful and right, and is the beſt in every caſe, whatever is in conformity with nature, with the will of God, with our relations towards him and other things; and wherever this readineſs and aptitude is, there no oppoſition, no inherent contradiction can find place, no duty to be obſerved to the diſadvantage or neglect of another, no kind of moral good to be ſought and practiſed at the expenſe of another.

The value of virtue is ſecondly far more unchangeable than the value of all other goods and endowments. The value of riches is regulated by our wants and the wants of the ſociety in which we live. We may ſuppoſe caſes, where they would be abſolutely uſeleſs and become a mere burden to us. The value of honour changes according to the opinions, the uſages, the political inſtitutions of mankind; it riſes and falls and becomes in itſelf more or leſs deſirable, according as the outward tokens of general eſtimation are more rare or more numerous, are diſtributed with diſcreet ſelection, or indiſcriminately conferred: and out of ſocial life, in the ſilence of retirement, they almoſt ceaſe to be advantages. The value of ſenſual pleaſure is not more fixed and and permanent: how much of it depends on accidents, on derived and received opinions, and tacit conſent: how much on the conſtitution and frame of our body, the irritability of our nerves, the ſtate of our health, our age and other circumſtances! How various and how different the aſpects

under which it appears and is agreeable in different times and different places! How often is it inſipid, how often fulſome, how often does it ceaſe from being pleaſure, and how frequently does it change into pain! Even the endowments of the mind, erudition, ſcience, art, are obnoxious to numberleſs viciſſitudes. Their value changes according to the prevailing taſte; as this or the other kind of ſcience or mental abilities are more or leſs eſteemed, admired, preferred.

The value of virtue alone is always invariably the ſame; at all times, among all nations, in all circumſtances, amidſt the manifold changes and chances of life, alone immutable. Indeed not what we call particular virtues, which may be differently eſtimated in different times and in different places, may be now more now leſs in general eſteem. But the habits of thought and action, the temper, the character, the ſtate of the rational mind, which we term virtue, and which alone deſerves that name, is invariably the ſame, always and everywhere retains its value. Truth, order, goodneſs, integrity, can never ceaſe to be truth, order, goodneſs, integrity, though we live in this place or in that, are connected with theſe or with other people, in ſolitude or in company, in proſperity or in adverſity, in health or in ſickneſs. Even after our terreſtrial life, they are and remain exactly what they were while that laſted. Riches, honours, ſenſual gratifications, are totally loſt to us in death. We cannot even reſcue all in-

tellectual pleaſures from deſtruction. Who knows how much or how little of our knowledge, our ſcience, or our art, therefore alſo of the pleaſure attached to them and ariſing from them, we ſhall be able to take with us into the other world? All that we now reckon for ſuch we certainly ſhall not retain. — But nothing, my dear friends, nothing can impair our virtue; nothing diminiſh its value. The regularity that once prevails in our mind, the good habits it has once acquired, its love to all that is true and good, its love to God and all mankind, remain with it after the death of the body, as certainly as it retains them till that death arrive. They will have juſt the ſame value in the future ſtate as they had here, — will be there juſt as perfect, juſt as bleſſed, and render the ſoul far more perfect and more bleſſed, than they could do here.

The value of virtue is thirdly much more univerſal and more independent on ſtation and relation than that of all other, and particularly of external goods; or, it is more generally uſeful than all others, and therefore poſſeſſes a greater worth than they. Riches would utterly ceaſe to be riches, if all men lived in abundance. Honour would loſe much of its value, at leaſt in the preſent ſtate of things, if it gave us no precedence over others; if every man could make and authenticate the ſame pretenſions to it. Many kinds of ſenſual pleaſure would be extinct, if all men could partake in the enjoyment of them; many others would be far leſs prized and

ſought after, if they were not in ſome degree the property of particular claſſes and conditions of men. Society in general could not ſubſiſt, if the enjoyment of every, even innocent ſenſual pleaſure, and all the means and opportunities of it, were alike free to every man. Neither could human ſociety ſubſiſt, if all the members of it purſued only mental pleaſures, if they were only to exerciſe themſelves in ſcientific attainments, or in agreeable and entertaining knowledge; and a great proportion of the value of theſe things would preſently be reduced to nothing, if every man poſſeſſed them, and every man in the ſame degree.

Quite otherwiſe is the caſe with virtue, my pious hearers. That is invariably the ſame, among all claſſes and conditions of men. It comports with every rank, with every calling, with every way of life. It elevates every rank, dignifies every calling, alleviates every way of life. It adapts itſelf to both high and low, to rich and poor, to learned and unlearned, to every age, to both ſexes, to all ſocieties. It is profitable and honourable to all. It relaxes no band of ſocial life; but knits them all cloſer together. No man loſes anything by it, if another be virtuous likewiſe: but if all were virtuous, all would profit, infinitely profit thereby. Neither can virtue be too prevalent, too common, have too much influence on the temper and conduct of mankind. The more virtue, the leſs diſcord and miſery: the more virtue, the more peace and happineſs!

Virtue

Virtue has fourthly a pre-eminent value, by the excellent effects it produces in us; by the extraordinary good influence it has on our perfection and happineſs. It makes us much better, much more uſeful to our fellow-creatures, much fitter for a ſuperior life, much more godlike, than any other privilege or endowment that we poſſeſs.

Virtue renders us much better. Riches, honour, ſenſual and intellectual pleaſures, may ameliorate our outward condition, procure us agreeable ſenſations; may furniſh us with incitements, means, opportunity for acquiring ſound knowledge, for the practice of good works, and for promoting our moral improvement. Virtue is that which is performed by all theſe means, the end and aim to which they all conduce; it brings this improvement to effect, and makes us actually as perfect as our nature allows. Or, what is perfection but the harmony and full conſent of all the parts to one ultimate end and aim, the beſt ſtate to which anything is capable of being brought? And is that not virtue? Does not the faireſt order and harmony prevail in the ſoul of the virtuous man? Are not all his inclinations and abilities directed to what is true and good? Is he not continually purſuing the ſelf-ſame object? Has he not the ſame invariable view in all he thinks and wills and does?

Virtue further makes us far more generally uſeful than the poſſeſſion of all other endowments and privileges. Riches, honour, ſcience and know-

ledge, are certainly means of diverſified beneficence; means of becoming uſeful to our fellow-creatures in an eminent degree. But unleſs virtue accompany and guide us in the application of theſe means, we ſhall comparatively perform but little by them; we ſhall be often weary of employing them to that end; ſhall frequently do harm by them inſtead of good. It is virtue alone that teaches us rightly to uſe all theſe advantages, to employ them in the beſt and nobleſt manner. Riches, honour, art and ſcience, are commonly prejudicial without virtue; are very often the food and implements of the moſt deſtructive paſſions. But virtue without riches, without honour, without art and ſcience, is ſtill always uſeful; ſtill performs much good, and nought but good. How many acts of kindneſs may even the pooreſt, the meaneſt, the moſt illiterate but virtuous man, perform according to the extent of the ſphere in which he moves, by advice, by deed, by conſolation, by example! And how much more extenſively, how much more powerfully, may he operate, if he be adorned by thoſe diſtinctions, and ſtill retain his virtue!

Virtue likewiſe renders us more happy than all elſe can do. Riches and honour certainly procure us advantage; ſenſual and mental pleaſures afford us agreeable ſenſations. But neither the one nor the other can we enjoy ſo frequently, and but ſeldom in ſo high a degree, as we could deſire. Both

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the one and the other may become uſeleſs and prejudicial to us in a greater or leſs degree; may turn more to our diſquiet than to our ſatisfaction. Virtue alone can never become burdenſome, never be uſeleſs, never unprofitable, to us. It bleſſes us at all times; ſolaces, comforts, gladdens us at all times, gives us always the beſt counſel; leads us always the ſureſt way; brings us always nearer to our mark. Wherever truth and order are, there are ſerenity and content; where pure and generous love prevails, there happineſs has fixt her throne. The man who feels and maintains his inherent dignity, can be abridged of externals, without becoming unhappy: the man whoſe will is in perfect ſubordination to the will of God, has and can do what he will, ſince he wills and does nothing but what God calls him to will and to do!

For the very ſame reaſon, my pious hearers, virtue renders us much fitter for a better, a ſuperior life, than all other poſſeſſions; nay, it is that alone which can fit us for it. It paſſes for as much in heaven as it does upon earth, and much more. There we can as little diſpenſe with it as here: it is there the dignity and the life of our ſpirit, as well as here. Nay, there it is all in all; the complete equivalent for all the external privileges and endowments we loſe by death, the foundation of all greater, nobler activity, of all ſuperior honour and power, the point of union with the inhabitants of the better world. It is that which

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all the wife and good fubjects of God, in the whole extent of his immenfe domain, have in common with each other; what indiffolubly binds them together, and brings them ever nearer to him, their creator and father.

Yes, virtue affimilates us with God far more than all other privileges and attainments. What we call riches, my dear friends, is poverty with God. Our exaltation and power is the weakneſs and imbecility of an infant in his eyes. Our very knowledge and erudition is, for the moſt part, error and darkneſs in his pure light. By ſuch attainments we can acquire no reſemblance to him, or only in an infinitely remote degree, never properly become affimilated with him. But to will what God wills; to love truth and order, as God loves them; to wiſh well and to do good to all mankind, as God is benevolent and beneficent; to ſeek and find our ſatisfaction in the beſt employment of our faculties and the moſt uſeful courſe of action, as God finds his therein: thus, my dear friends, thus we are ever approaching nearer to God — very near — are continually becoming more like him, and ever fitter for nearer fellowſhip with him. And it is virtue that exalts us to this, and virtue alone.

Who then can ſtill entertain a doubt, that of all advantages it is the greateſt, the moſt exalted, of all goods the beſt and moſt deſirable, — that it is of more value than riches and honour, than majeſty

jeſty and power, than all ſenſual voluptuouſneſs, than knowledge and ſcience — more than tranſient, ſuddenly riſing and quickly evaporating devotion — more than health and life; virtue, which is the health of the mind and the life of the ſpirit?

Virtue, fair daughter of heaven, the beſt miſtreſs of our ſouls, is of more account with God, her father, than all beſides. It is the faireſt lineament of his image in man; the ſole means whereby he can pleaſe him; the only endowment which by his meſſengers he has honoured with his expreſs and ſovereign approbation; the ſtandard by which he will hereafter diſpenſe his glorious rewards. Without it he rejects the moſt coſtly offerings and oblations, the moſt ſolemn rites, the moſt rigorous exerciſes. With it he favourably accepts every holy deſire of the heart, every ſincere inclination, every honeſt endeavour. — It was virtue that exalted an Abraham to the dignity of his peculiar friend: it was ſhe that affixed the mark of adoption by God on all the wiſe and good of every age and clime. It was ſhe that diſtinguiſhed Jeſus with the ſtamp of the only-begotten and beloved of the Father, as the ſuperlative exemplar of all human perfection, qualified him for the cloſeſt and moſt intimate communion with God, his father, and exalted him to be lord over all!

And canſt thou refuſe her thy eſteem, thy reverence, o man, o chriſtian, who haſt yet any

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ſentiment of what is venerable and excellent? No, beware of ſtifling this ſenſe of truth in thy heart! Eſteem and revere virtue more than whatever elſe lays claim to thy eſteem an reverence. In honouring virtue, thou honoureſt God. Eſteem and revere her then wherever thou find her, under whatever aſpect, in whatever garb ſhe appears, in what language ſoever ſhe ſpeaks to thee, by what actions ſoever ſhe makes herſelf known! Do juſtice to her, not only in general, but in every particular perſon whom ſhe animates and governs. Virtue, in the groſs, is no more than an abſtract idea, an image of the mind: ſhe actually exiſts only in particular beings. In theſe we ſhould eſteem and revere her. He that deſpiſes any poor and mean but virtuous man, deſpiſes virtue herſelf; and if thou deſpiſe virtue, o man! thou deſpiſeſt all that is beautiful, that is great, that is venerable; thou deſpiſeſt God, the primordial fount of all perfection.

But doſt thou eſteem her as ſhe deſerves? Oh then heſitate not a moment on what thou haſt to do, which thou haſt to chuſe, when thou art to determine between her and riches, between her and the honour of men, between her and ſenſual or intellectual bliſs. Rather ſuffer the privation of them all, than forſake or injure her. Doſt thou ſtill refuſe to ſacrifice all that militates with her diſpoſition and inclinations; doſt thou ſtill make anxious efforts to loſe nothing on either hand;

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does every trifling loſs, thou ſuffereſt for her ſake, ſtill give thee pain? Oh then ſay not that thou art virtuous!

No, wilt thou be ſo? Be ſo without reſerve. Think not to put aſunder what God and the nature of things have joined in cloſe indiſſoluble bands. Here it may be ſaid with propriety, All or nothing! Here no compromiſe can be made! — So long as thou endeavoureſt to compare and to connect virtue with vice — the two moſt contradictory and incompatible things in nature — with one another, thou art doubly wretched. Thou enjoyeſt not the felicity of virtue, and only in part even the fleeting and tranſient pleaſures of vice, not with a tranquil mind, not without ſecret anguiſh and reproach. Wouldſt thou be happy and continue happy, and be ever improving thy happineſs; oh then decide totally and firmly and irrevocably for Virtue! Let her inform and animate thy ſoul, convert thee as it were into a new creature, let her accompany and guide thee at all times and in all places; be the moving ſpirit of thy whole behaviour! Then wilt thou perceive and experience how great, how unſpeakably great, her value is; what dignity and ſtrength ſhe imparts to man, what peace and felicity ſhe procures him; and then wilt thou be elated in the poſſeſſion of her for ever and ever!

SERMON XIII.

The Pre-eminent Value of Chriſtian Virtue.

GOD, who art the creator and father of us and of all mankind, how eminently haſt thou favoured us, thy children, by having called us to chriſtianity! Though thou haſt left none of thy rational creatures entirely deſtitute of all means and incitements to become wiſe and good and happy, leading them all gradually to the perfection of which they are capable: yet haſt thou granted us the beſt means, the moſt powerful incentives by pointing out to us the directeſt, the ſureſt, the neareſt road to perfection. By thy ſon Jeſus thou haſt plainly and authentically diſcovered to us thy will; in him given us the beſt, the trueſt guide and precurſor on the path of virtue, the moſt exalted pattern for our imitation; by him opened to us the faireſt the moſt glorious proſpects in a better world, in a ſuperior, an everlaſting life! Yes, thou haſt amply offered to us all, and doſt amply ſtill offer to us all that we want for life and godlineſs, all that can render us

virtuous

virtuous and godly in a ſuperior degree. Praiſe be to thee, kind, liberal, merciful parent! Oh might thy goodneſs inſpire us with pure gratitude and joy! Oh could we all think of it without ſhame and confuſion! Oh were we all ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo devout, as chriſtians might and ought to be! But perhaps only few of us are ſo! Perhaps chriſtian virtue and chriſtian happineſs are too rare and ſtrange even among chriſtians! Ah do thou, gracious Father, have pity upon us! Let us no longer merely bear the name of chriſtians, but really be and conſtantly more completely become ſo. Let the empire of thy ſon Jeſus, our lord and king, be enlarged and eſtabliſhed by the farther and farther revelation of the divine efficacy of his doctrine among us. To that end, let us now ſo convincingly recognize and apprehend the true nature of chriſtian virtue and the excellency of it, that we may ſincerely revere it, be cordially enamoured of it, and entirely ruled and governed by it. This unſpeakable bleſſing we aſk of thee as votaries and adherents of Jeſus, addreſſing thee, further, in firm reliance on his promiſes, as, Our father, &c.

2 PETER i. 3.

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

VIRTUE, my pious hearers, has, and ever retains a certain value, be it as defective and imperfect as it may, by whomsoever it is practised and exhibited, and in whatever manner. Truth is and continues forever truth: order is and continues forever order. And whoever steadily pursues a course of thought and action consistent with the relations in which he stands to God and all that is without him, thinks and acts consistently with the truth and the order of things; and this at all times and in all places, must be right and expedient. Even though the principles on which we perform what is right and expedient, and the views wherein we do so, may abate and obscure the value of these actions, the value of virtue; yet even this cannot wholly expunge it. The gold that is not yet purified from dross, does not on that account cease to be gold. We should therefore be afraid of incurring the guilt of a criminal insult upon virtue, were we to pronounce, with some antient christian teachers, all the virtues of the heathens, or such as were not christians, to be splendid sins. Many of their famous exploits may well have been so; as at present so many seemingly

ſeemingly good — very good — actions of chriſtians are in reality nothing leſs than good. But we are not on that account to condemn them all, and declare all the truly great, noble, public-ſpirited actions they performed, to be merely the reſult of mean ſelf-intereſt and the baſeſt paſſions. No man is altogether inſenſible to truth, or totally incapable of thinking and acting in conformity to it; and whoever can do ſo, can be and act alſo more or leſs virtuouſly. The ſtronger and more prevalent this apprehenſion is, the more univerſal and active will virtue be. Is that not excluſively the peculiar property of any nation, of any man, ſo neither can this.

But it is with chriſtian virtue as with a hundred other matters. Mankind are prone to extol ſome one thing of undoubted excellence, and then to think they cannot do better than to vilify not only what is at variance, but likewiſe whatever has moſt reſemblance and moſt affinity with it, what comes the neareſt to it, in ſuch a manner as to allow it no value at all. So one virtue is often extolled at the expenſe of another; and ſo in particular is chriſtian virtue at the expenſe of the nonchriſtian. But may not then two things be good or excellent, and yet one be better and more excellent than the other? Leave therefore the nonchriſtian virtue all the value it has; revere goodneſs of every kind, and revere goodneſs wherever you find it; let every man have juſtice, the nonchriſtian as well as the chriſtian. Chriſtian virtue can loſe nothing by it;

ſhe always remains what ſhe is, and uniformly retains a great preeminence over every other virtue. Of this my preſent diſcourſe ſhall give you more determinate information, my pious hearers.

We have already inveſtigated the value of ſeveral of the ingredients of human happineſs; the value of riches, of honour, of ſenſual pleaſure, of intellectual pleaſure, of devotion, of ſenſibility, and virtue; we have ſhewn you that virtue far excels all thoſe endowments: we propoſe to-day to endeavour at giving you an inſight into the excellency or the preeminent value of chriſtian virtue, when compared with all other virtue, and thereby to increaſe your reverence for it. Theſe reflections will convince us how true that is which the apoſtle Peter affirms in our text: God has imparted to us chriſtians, by the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, or by the chriſtian religion, as much of his divine energy as we had need of for leading a religious and godly life. That is: by the chriſtian doctrine, and its divine influence upon us, the leading of ſuch a life is rendered much eaſier to us, and we may advance farther in virtue and piety, than we otherwiſe could. And this we now will take upon us more circumſtantially to illuſtrate and to prove.

You know, my pious hearers, what it is we underſtand by virtue in general. We mean the conſtitution of our mind, the direction and adaptation of its faculties in ſuch a manner as enables us conſtantly ſo to think, to be ſo inclined, ſo to act, as is

conſiſtent with truth, with order, with the will of God; the univerſal, predominant, operative inclination to whatever is true and right and expedient, in conformity to our nature and our relative ſituations, and to the nature and relative ſituations of other things: the conſtant readineſs to do or not to do, to ſuffer or to bear, to be and to have, or not to be and not to have, what God wills us to do or not to do, to bear or ſuffer, to be and to have, or not to be and not to have: the truth and harmony of all the parts of our inward and outward conduct between themſelves and with the law of God. In this undoubtedly conſiſts the eſſence of virtue.

Now if it be the doctrines of chriſtianity which give this direction and adaptation to our mind and its faculties; if it be the doctrines of chriſtianity that produce in us theſe predominant inclinations to truth and order, to whatever is right and good and in every caſe the beſt; if it be the doctrines of chriſtianity which ſo abſolutely ſubdue our inclinations to the will of God; if it be gratitude for the benefits which God has conferred upon us by his ſon Jeſus, and for the hopes to which he has elevated us by him; if it be an intimate and cordial love to God, and love to our ſaviour and lord, which impel us to ſuch a diſpoſition and to ſuch a conduct, which produce in us ſo beautiful a harmony between all our thoughts, inclinations, propenſities, actions; if it be the precepts and the example of Jeſus which conduct and lead us to it; if it be his ſpirit, his

mind, which lives and governs in us, and appears through us, then is our virtue chriſtian virtue. It has ariſen in us by chriſtianity; it is nouriſhed and ſtrengthened in us by chriſtianity; it is framed upon the doctrines and commands of chriſtianity; it is nothing elſe but vital chriſtianity, put in action and reduced to practice.

Now to ſuch chriſtian virtue we aſcribe a pre-eminent value; and this it actually poſſeſſes, whether we conſider it in regard to its ſources, or its rule, or its motives, or its extent, or its views. In all theſe particulars it is purer, greater, firmer, more active, more beneficial, more bleſſed, than it would be without the help of chriſtianity; in all theſe particulars it therefore excels every other virtue which is deſtitute of this help. Not to inſiſt at preſent upon the ſeveral compariſons neceſſary for the demonſtration of this, we ſhall only examine what chriſtian virtue more peculiarly is, and then leave you to draw your own concluſions concerning its excellency.

The ſources whence it ſprings are therefore the pureſt; the grounds on which it reſts the firmeſt, and both the moſt adapted to the nature of man. It is the fruit of a heart altered, ameliorated, and as it were reformed, new-moulded by the doctrines of chriſtianity: or, if it have taken early poſſeſſion of it, ere vice could have tenaciouſly ſtruck its fibres in it, then is it the frame and temper of a mind thoroughly impregnated with theſe doctrines and formed upon them. Their

roots

roots therefore lie deep; take faſt hold; extend through all the faculties and all the conduct of the man; and blend, inſinuate, and aſſimilate themſelves with his whole nature. Chriſtian virtue is not an accidental, tranſient effect of particular thoughts and emotions, but the effect and reſult of the whole thinking and ſenſitive ſyſtem. Its force and duration is not dependent on this or that particular idea, but on one entire inſeparable effect and reſult of the moſt important ideas, of the grandeſt and moſt exalted truths. It is grounded on all that chriſtianity tells us concerning God, his attributes, his providence, his relation towards us, and particularly of his love and clemency to weak, ſinful, guilty creatures; on all that it diſcovers to us concerning our nature, our origin, the proper end of our creation, the final judgment and the future retribution; on all that it teaches us concerning Jeſus, concerning his great buſineſs upon earth, his aſſiſtance afforded to mankind, his holy life and beneficial death, his connection with us, his dominion over us, his love to us, his ſpirit in us. If theſe doctrines preſent themſelves to a man, as undeniable ſacred truths; if he apprehend their truth, their certainty, their importance,—feel how intimately they are connected with his preſent and future happineſs; if they pour their radiance on his mind, and operate in their whole force upon his heart; if the love of God and of his ſon Jeſus deeply affect him, penetrate him, fill

him with ſincere remorſe for his ſins and iniquities, excite him to gratitude, inſpire him with mutual affection; if he have learnt to uſe and exult in the profered aſſiſtance from on high; if he perceive and feel that his all depends on the favour of God, how wretched he ſhould be and continue to be without it, how bleſſed he is become by it, and how much more ſo he may be and become; if he feel the happineſs of being a chriſtian, pardoned, abſolved from guilt and puniſhment, called to a bleſſed immortality, conſtantly ſtrive to render himſelf more capable and worthy of this happineſs, to draw nigher to his God and to his Saviour; and all theſe diſpoſitions and feelings be predominant in him: then he obtains, as it were, a new ſpirit and a new heart, is a new creature, — is virtuous, and chriſtianly virtuous. And who ſees not how pure, how rich, how inexhauſtible, this ſource of virtue muſt be in him; on what ſolid foundations the edifice of ſuch a virtue reſts? How differently muſt all theſe doctrines, and the bleſſed alteration effected by them in his whole frame, act on him; how much more life and power to good impart to him, than the bare idea, however otherwiſe correct and true, of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of things, of their natural relations, ends and energies! How much more adapted are they to the nature and capacities of man, of all mankind and every individual, however different the ſize of their comprehenſion and their ſenſitive powers!

The

The rule of chriſtian virtue, and this is its ſecond advantage, the rule of chriſtian virtue is more fixed, more ſure, more infallible and more uſeful than any other. God has indeed inſcribed all his laws upon our hearts; but how much has that divine inſcription been defaced, with the generality of mankind by prejudices, errors, luſts, paſſions, with how many is it thus rendered illegible and almoſt obliterated! — God has indeed made us all capable of a lively ſenſe, a quick, ſafe judgment of what is good and bad, right and wrong: but how ſeldom is this capacity ſo unfolded and cultivated, how ſeldom this judgment ſo exerciſed and ſharpened, as to be a ſure guide to us on all occaſions! How often on the contrary is that ſentiment ſtifled by the multitude of oppoſite practices, cuſtoms, examples, and this judgment perverted by the artifices of ſelf-love! How often therefore muſt even the well-intentioned man, the friend of virtue, who has no other guide than theſe, be deficient in due certainty and reſolution! How often, where his path divides in two, muſt he be liable to perplexity!

A perplexity, which the friend of chriſtian virtue far leſs frequently experiences, which he may totally avoid, if he adhere firmly to the direction given him. His path is pointed out before him: he finds in every part of it the footſteps of his leader and precurſor Jeſus. Here are the expreſs precepts and commands of God, his lawgiver and father.

This is the way thou ſhalt go; thou ſhalt not turn aſide to the right hand or to the left! There is the example of Jeſus, the great captain of our ſalvation. As he was diſpoſed, ſo muſt thou, his diſciple, his follower, be diſpoſed; as he walked, ſo muſt thou alſo walk. How can I ſtand heſitating there, how fall into error, how wander from my mark? As a chriſtian, I believe in God, and believe in Jeſus; I confidently truſt myſelf to God, my heavenly father, and to his ſon, my ſaviour and lord; — I know that God loves me; I know that Jeſus loves me; I know that my creator and my redeemer intend nothing but my happineſs, — I therefore do, what God bids me to do; abſtain from what he bids me avoid; endure what he bids me to undergo; — follow as Jeſus leads, tread confidently in his footſteps, form myſelf upon his ſpirit, think and act as he thought and acted: frequently aſk myſelf, what would he have done, or not have done, in my circumſtances and condition? — and while I do thus, how can I — I repeat my interrogation — how can I ſtand heſitating, how go aſtray, how wander from my mark? My guides are infallible; their precepts are divine truth. My path is luminous; ſhews itſelf diſtinctly from all by-paths and devious ways; never loſes itſelf in dark indirect turnings; leads ſtrait forward to the mark; grows conſtantly ſmoother and plainer, the nearer it brings me to it. — With what comfortable aſſurance then may I walk along it!

How

How ſecurely purſue my courſe! To what a certainty and ſtability will it bring me in the practice of virtue!

The range of chriſtian virtue is likewiſe, my pious hearers, far wider, its activity greater than the ſcope and activity of any other virtue. Chriſtianity, and chriſtianity alone, teaches us to conſider all things, the ſmall as well as the great, the ſeemingly inſignificant as well as the more important, ſo much in their dependance upon God; connects all ſo cloſely with his will; unites the whole of our preſent life, with all its occupations, pleaſures, concerns, ſo intimately and indiſſolubly with our future ſuperior life; calls us to look ſo ſteadfaſtly to God and to Jeſus, that, with the man who is entirely animated by the ſpirit of chriſtianity, all is virtue, — all, even his moſt trivial actions, are the products and expoſitions of virtue. "Whether therefore," as it is written, "he eateth or drinketh, or whatſoever he doth, he doth all to the glory of God." — "Whatſoever he doth in word or deed, he doth all in the name of the lord Jeſus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." To the chriſtian, my dear friends, nothing is in ſome ſenſe indifferent, nothing unimportant: the ſpirit which lives and governs in him, gives a grace and dignity to all he thinks and does. The apprehenſion of God, exultation in him, the eager deſire to pleaſe him, the proſpects in futurity, give greater life, greater dignity, greater conſequence, to whatever

ever befalls him and whatever he is employed in. He conſiders, judges, does, enjoys and endures all things in the light of divine truth — all as a chriſtian. Every buſineſs of his vocation is to him a commiſſion from God; every inſuperable obſtruction he meets with in it, is a prohibition of God; every propitious circumſtance, the aſſiſtance and the bleſſing of God; every pleaſure, every inſtance of ſucceſs, a benefaction of God; every misfortune, a diſpenſation of God: every good, every wicked man, an inſtrument in the hand of God. His whole life therefore is one continued act of obedience, a conſtant reſignation to the divine will, and a filial reverence of the good pleaſure of God. His virtue therefore includes all things, acts in all and by all, ſanctifies all, completes all, combines all with each other and with God; forſakes him in no place, at no time, in no condition; and the field of his action is as ſpacious as the range of his thoughts, his ſenſations, his affairs, his pleaſures, the combinations of his comforts and his afflictions!

And no wonder, my pious hearers, that the virtue of the chriſtian comprehends ſo much, and operates ſo far. The incitements, the motives he acts upon as a chriſtian, are far more various and cogent than any others. They touch his heart, while they employ his underſtanding. They take poſſeſſion of his affections, captivate his whole ſenſibility, at the very time that they convince his reaſon. Chriſtianity is calculated for all mankind,

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and ſtill more for the man of ſenſibility than for the man of cold abſtracted thought. What the philoſopher calls and juſtly calls truth, order, fitneſs of things, is here at the ſame time the command of God, our creator and lawgiver; the expreſs will of our ſupreme benefactor; the precept and admonition and example of a ſaviour and redeemer who died out of love to us; it is the only means of pleaſing this gracious God, of delighting this generous redeemer, and of ſharing in his power and glory; it is the way that leads to a bleſſed immortality, to the poſſeſſion of the moſt exalted prerogatives, to the fruition of the pureſt joys in a better world. Here all the ſprings of human action are ſet in motion, whatever uſually incites us to the uſe of our faculties, and renders us ſteady in the exertions of them: reverence, gratitude, love, reſignation, joy, hope; deſire of applauſe, thirſt of pleaſure, of perfection, of happineſs. And what effects muſt not this produce in the human heart! What force of habit, of error, of bad example, of ſenſuality, is able to reſiſt their united force?

How can I not love God, the God who loved me ſo much, ſo inexpreſſibly, as to give his only begotten to be my ſaviour; who through him has exalted me to the dignity of being his ſon, and called me to ſupreme felicity! And how love him, this God, without keeping all his commandments, and conforming myſelf entirely to his will? —How can I revere Jeſus, the only begotten of the

the father, who humbled himſelf ſo far for mankind, did and ſuffered for them ſo much, imparted to them ſo much light, comfort, freedom, hope, felicity; how ſee him dying on the croſs, and thereby depriving death of all terrors for me; how be enabled to connect myſelf ſo intimately with him; how revere him as my lord and king, without devoting myſelf entirely to him, without being ready to do and to ſuffer, to hazard and to ſacrifice all for him who dared and ſacrificed ſo much for me, who even laid down his life for my ſake?— — How can I expect his laſt advent to judgment and to retribution and rejoice in it, without conſtantly preparing myſelf for it by a holy conduct and a godly life? How tranſport myſelf in ſpirit into the abode of the bleſſed, which he has opened and prepared for me, and here not think and live as that higher ſtate requires? — And if I love God, if I love Jeſus; if I look to futurity; if I feel how much, how infinitely much, I am beholden to God and to his ſon Jeſus, how bleſſed I am already in the enjoyment of theſe benefits, and how much more bleſſed I ſhall hereafter become; what duty will then be too hard for me, what ſacrifice that God may require of me too coſtly: what ſin will not be hateful to me; what opportunity for doing good and for becoming uſeful to my brethren like Jeſus, will not be right welcome to me? Certainly, my dear friends, he who ſo thinks — and ſo muſt the chriſtian think, who is a chriſtian in deed and

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in truth — can never be wanting in incitements, in deſire and ability to good; has more and ſtronger motives to be virtuous, and conſtantly to improve in virtue, than any other man who has not the happineſs to be a chriſtian.

And how much more noble and grand are laſtly the views of chriſtian virtue! How much ſuperior and more excellent the mark at which it aims! All virtue has in view the promoting of what is true, what is beautiful and good; all virtue aims at order, at perfection, at happineſs. But not as chriſtian virtue does. The greater and juſter the knowledge is which the chriſtian has of God, of Jeſus, of the chief end of man, of futurity; the nobler muſt be his ſentiments, the more comprehenſive his views, the more exalted the object at which he aims! — The whole human race is but one large family to him, and that the family of God, his heavenly father; a family which he embraces with his benevolence and viſits with his love; and his affectionate activity is circumſcribed by no falſe patriotiſm, is weakened by no prejudices of rank or nation. — Jeſus is to him, Jeſus that is highly exalted over all, is to him the lord and king of men; truth and virtue and liberty and happineſs, are the preferments and diſtinctions of his kingdom; and every word, every deed, every ſacrifice, every ſuffering whereby the chriſtian is enabled to bring one man from error to truth, from vice to virtue, from bondage into freedom, whereby he

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can amend, conſole, or exhilarate him, is to him an enlargement and confirmation of the glorious kingdom of Jeſus, an actual participation in his great work on earth. To him this life is the porch or veſtibule of the future, the apprenticeſhip to it: and all that he does and operates here, and occaſions others to do and effect; all the harm that he here prevents; all the good he here performs; all the grain he here ſows; all the bloſſoms he brings to fruit; are to him cauſes that infinitely extend in effects. This is to him the ſeed-time, of which he may expect hereafter to reap a harveſt of a thouſand-fold. What proſpects, my devout auditors, what extenſive, what comprehenſive views does the virtue of the chriſtian open before him! He promotes the gracious purpoſes of God with regard to man, and labours in fellowſhip with him, his heavenly father, for the benefit of his children: eſpouſes the cauſe of truth, of integrity, of liberty, the cauſe of God, to the utmoſt of his power: proſecutes the work that Jeſus began on earth, and enlarges the borders of his kingdom: aſſiſts mankind, his brethren, in their education for heaven; and is uſeful to them not only here, not only long after his death, but even in eternity. How much muſt ſuch proſpects as theſe ennoble all his virtuous efforts and actions! Can the imagination frame any loftier, any more extenſive ends than theſe?

And

And will they ever allow him to be weary or disheartened in his endeavours to improve himself and others? Will he ever set bounds to his wisdom, his goodness, his general utility; ever think that he has done too much, or even enough? No, his aim is perfection, christian perfection, ever greater assimilation to Jesus, ever progressive approximation to God. Nothing short of this can satisfy him. The standard by which he measures the value or the magnitude of his virtue, is not the judgment of the world, but the judgment of heaven; not what he is and does, but what he can do and what he may be. Even when he has laboured long at his improvement, has already made great advances, already done much, brought much about, and suffered much, he still exclaims, with the apostle, "Not that I have already attained or am already perfect." No, I forget those things that are behind, I scarcely make account of what I have already attempted and achieved, while so much remains for me to do; I press forward, after the higher degrees of perfection I have not yet attained, after the prize of the mark of righteousness and integrity I have then to expect when I surmount all things and persevere unto the end.

Yes, this is thy generous dispositon, this thy modest and yet ardent language, thou best and surest guide of man, o christian virtue! — Blessed be thy arrival upon earth! and blessed the Lord who brought

brought thee amongſt men, and laid the foundations of thy empire in their hearts! Gentle is thy ſway, and obedience to thee is liberty and peace. Thou giveſt ſtrength to the weary, and power to the impotent. Thou lifteſt up the poor out of the mire; thou exalteſt the humble and meek. Thou bleſſeſt them with the ſentiment of their preſent and future dignity. Thou art divine wiſdom to the unlearned as well as to the learned. Thou giveſt reſolution to the irreſolute; inſpireſt the dead with life, and the timid with the courage of heroes. The miſerable is indebted to thee for his ſweeteſt comfort, the deſpiſed good man for the inward repoſe of his ſpirit, the victim of perſecution for the rewarding conſciouſneſs of his integrity and conſtancy, the ſufferer for his ſilent perſevering courage, and the dying man for his joyful hopes. Thou haſt performed and ſtill daily performeſt, numberleſs noble acts, which never come to the knowledge of any mortal, which are ſullied by no vain thirſt of fame, which he only ſees who ſees in ſecret, and which under his inſpection never ceaſe to ſpread happineſs and joy throughout his kingdom. Oh that thy dominion were univerſal, that every chriſtian were animated by thy warmth, and that every chriſtian might make thee his model for becoming what he is not yet!

Yes, my pious hearers, this may the chriſtian, and this ſhould he be! The light of the world, the

the ſalt of the earth, the inſtructor, the pattern, the improver, the helper, the ſaviour of the reſt of mankind; far wiſer, far more virtuous, a far more uſeful member of ſociety, a far greater benefactor to his brethren, than the wiſeſt, the beſt man, who is not a chriſtian! This is his calling, this his election; and this ſhould be the ultimate end of his purſuit!

And it promiſes him, both in the preſent and in the future world, far greater happineſs than to any other wiſe and virtuous man. Every degree of virtue renders us ſuſceptible of a certain degree of happineſs; wherefore we, no more than God, exclude any good man from all felicity. But chriſtian virtue is the way that leads to the pureſt and the ſublimeſt felicity. — Walk then therein, o thou that haſt the happineſs to be called a chriſtian! Thy buſineſs ſhould not merely be to eſcape everlaſting perdition, or to be tranſported after death into a ſtate not altogether wretched. Wouldſt thou be a chriſtian indeed, and turn the privileges of chriſtianity to thy real advantage, then muſt thou think more generouſly, purſue greater objects, riſe ſuperior to all thy brethren who are not chriſtians; aſpire after a higher felicity, that hereafter thou mayſt be, ſtill more than here, the leader, the teacher, the benefactor, the helper, of thy leſs perfect and leſs happy brethren; that thou mayſt be ever approaching nearer to God, ever acquiring a

greater aſſimilation with Jeſus, and mayſt have progreſſively more communion with the father and with his ſon. What a proſpect, my dear friends! Oh may it be ever preſent to our minds, to our conſtant improvement in all chriſtian virtue, perpetually bringing us nearer to perfection!

SERMON XIV.

The Pleaſures of Virtue.

GOD, ſupreme, uncontroulable ruler of all worlds, ſovereign diſpoſer of the affairs of men, to obey thee is pure felicity. The ways thou commandeſt us, as rational creatures, to walk, are ways of pleaſantneſs, all the paths thou pointeſt out to us are peace, they infallibly lead to happineſs. If thou require of us virtue and obedience, thou requireſt them becauſe without them we cannot be at reſt, cannot be contented, and could not enjoy ſo many real ſubſtantial pleaſures, ſo many pure delights, or but in a very inferior degree. Yes, this we clearly perceive in the calmeſt, beſt hours of our rational life, when reaſon and conſcience, nature and ſcripture addreſs us in loud accents and too diſtinct to be mistaken. Oh might we not forget it, even then acknowledge and believe it when turbulent paſſions are ſtirring within us, when temptations and dangers and bad example beſet us, amidſt the tumult of worldly affairs and diſtractions! Oh might virtue even then

be our companion and guide, our monitor and protector! How ſecurely ſhould we walk! How contented and bleſſed ſhould we be! We are now aſſembled before thee, retired within theſe walls from the incumbering world, to a place conſecrated to reflection on the moſt momentous ſubjects, that we may remind ourſelves of thoſe eternal truths, and imprint them deeply on our minds and our hearts. Oh then let our reflections upon them be bleſſed! Do thou teach us to eſteem virtue for what ſhe is, let her preſent herſelf to us in her captivating form attended by her peculiar ſatisfactions and delights, that we may continually learn to revere and love her the more, and more carefully follow her dictates. We make our prayers to thee in this behalf as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, the moſt perfect exemplar, the grand patron and promoter of virtue, addreſſing thee further in his name: Our father, &c.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

OF all the miſtaken notions that may be and actually are entertained in regard to moral objects, not one is more pernicious than this, that though virtue may hope for joys and rewards in a future world, yet in the preſent ſhe procures but few pleaſures to her votaries and friends. Who can be ignorant

norant how much more forcibly we are affected by the preſent than by the future, and how extremely difficult it is to the generality of mankind to be entirely intereſted about the latter, to the neglect of the former? To ſuffer at preſent, in order at ſometime hereafter to rejoice; to impoſe reſtraints on our appetites and to do violence to ourſelves at preſent, in order, at ſome diſtant, indeterminate period to live the more comfortably and happy; to ſacrifice and relinquiſh at preſent a number of things that we love and value, in order to receive a twofold or a tenfold compenſation hereafter; to be ſcrupulouſly abſtinent at preſent, in the hope of future enjoyment, and voluntarily to endure want and pain, in order hereafter to enjoy a greater abundance of ſatisfactions and delights: all this is by no means pleaſing to the ſenſual man, and can only work upon ſuch as have a mind invigorated by habitual reflection; whoſe reaſon has already in ſome degree acquired the maſtery over ſenſe. Need we then wonder, if virtue labours under an evil report among ſuch numbers of perſons, at moſt exciting in them reverence, but not love, holding as they do her ſervice to be hard and ſevere, and the compliance with her commands a joyleſs duty; perſuading themſelves that ſhe requires more ſacrifice and renunciation of pleaſure, than ſhe procures enjoyment of it? If they would be enamoured of virtue, they muſt learn differently to regard and to judge of her. To them ſhe muſt appear as the wiſeſt, the gentleſt

ſovereign, the trueſt friend, the moſt liberal diſpenſer of joy to mankind. And this in truth ſhe is, my dear friends; neither reaſon nor ſcripture, neither our own nor foreign experience will allow us to doubt of it. The ways of wiſdom, ſays our text, or, which is juſt the ſame thing, the ways of virtue are pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are happineſs, are peace. Oh that I may be enabled, my pious hearers, to expoſe that pernicious error, and to convince you of its oppoſite truth, of the truth that virtue and pleaſure are connected together in the cloſeſt bands! I intend to lay before you the various pleaſures of a virtuous and pious life. I will firſt enumerate and deſcribe them; and then make ſome remarks in order to juſtify my propoſition. Enjoyment of innocence; ſentiment of order and truth; ſatisfaction with oneſelf; more eaſy and free intercourſe with others; more comfortable and confident thoughts on God; the ſatisfactions of beneficence and general uſefulneſs; the bleſſedneſs of love towards God and man; the faireſt proſpects in futurity: all theſe are pleaſures procured to us by virtue; ſome of them being entirely, and ſome eminently peculiar to her. Let us conſider and appretiate them apart.

Firſt then, Enjoyment of innocence. This is a pleaſure entirely peculiar to virtue; a pleaſure which no vicious man, however brilliant his fortune, can either underſtand or reliſh. And how great, how pure is this pleaſure! To be conſcious of no ill

deſign,

deſign, no intentionally bad action; to be haraſſed by no inordinate and ſordid paſſion; to be driven to and fro by no vehement ſenſual appetite; to be tortured by no reproaches, haunted by no dread of condign puniſhment; to be deceived neither by idle hopes nor vain alarms: but to have a good, unſullied conſcience before God and man; to bear within us the evidence of ſincerity and rectitude; to feel oneſelf free and to aſſert our liberty; to know that we are come out of darkneſs into light, from death to life, that we are reformed and renewed after the image of God, that we love and ſeek only what is good, readily do our duty, readily promote the intereſts of others, and are ever ſedulous to be and to do what in conformity to the will of God we ought to be and to do; in a word, to walk the way which God himſelf has pointed out to us, and of the rectitude and happy iſſue whereof we are aſſured; what ſerenity, what agreeable ſenſations, what bleſſed enjoyment of ſelf muſt this procure to a man! What cauſe has he to be elated in his exiſtence, in his life, in his capacities and powers, in his conduct and his appointment! How much more cheerfully and boldly may he purſue his way, and enjoy all the beautiful and good that he ſees and meets with on it, than if he were forced to accuſe and to condemn himſelf; than if he were under the harſh, tyrannical dominion of ſin and vice; than if, with all the pomp and glare that environed him, he were a

criminal, a ſlave, a creature fallen from its dignity and ripe for puniſhment.

Another pleaſure that virtue beſtows on man, is the ſight and conſcious ſenſe of truth and order that reign in his mind, in his heart, in the whole of his character, in all the parts of his inward and outward conduct, giving a peculiar dignity and beauty to his mind as well as to his life, which cannot be ſeen and obſerved without complacency. If vice beget inconſiſtency and ſtrife, disfiguring and degrading the man: virtue produces order and harmony, ennobling and beautifying whatever the man is and does. If the ſlave of the former be never truly in agreement with himſelf, but is diſcompoſed at one time by vile and diſgraceful luſts, at another by untoward accidents, at another by the paſſions of other men, and at all times agitated to and fro, and driven from his aim like a plaything of fortune: the friend of the latter, of virtue, poſſeſſes a temper and character at all times equal; he has ſtated principles on which he uniformly acts, fixt, determinate aims which he ſteadily purſues, and thus is ever coming nearer his mark, the prize of chriſtian perfection. Sentiments and ſenſations, appetites and affections, words and works, are with him in perfect uniſon. What he ſpeaks and ſays, that he thinks and feels: what he does, that he wills, and conceives to be right and expedient, the beſt he can do for the occaſion. In every place, at every time, in every occupation,

cupation, in every pleaſure, in ſociety as in ſolitude, in domeſtic as in civil life, in the avocations of buſineſs as in religious worſhip, he is ever the ſame; the ſame ſincere votary of God and his will, the ſame friend and promoter of truth and goodneſs, the ſame foe to all deceit and impoſture, to all flattery, to all baſe and ſordid purpoſes and actions, the ſame juſt and equitable judge of his brethren; the ſame humble, diſcreet, contented, kind, beneficent, generous-minded man and chriſtian; conſtantly animated by love to God and all mankind, conſtantly true to his conſcience and his duty, and conſtantly prompt to do and to ſuffer, whatever God ſhall will that he ſhould do and ſuffer. And to be this and to feel this, what ſweet repoſe, what pure delight muſt alſo this procure a man! Doubtleſs far more pleaſure than the view of a fine, graceful figure, or the ſentiment of health and vigour of body.

With this pleaſure a third is inſeparably united, and that is ſatisfaction with himſelf. Extremely ſeldom does the vicious man apprehend and enjoy it. Rarely is he altogether that which he could wiſh himſelf to be; ſeldom has he and does he that, which he could wiſh himſelf to have and to do; ſeldom can he entirely approve of his deſigns and undertakings; ſeldom can he look back on his paſt conduct, entirely without uneaſineſs, entirely without reproach, or conſider the preſent ſtate of his mind with entire approbation. But this the virtuous man can do, and this can he never do without heart-

heart-felt pleaſure. Free from culpable pride, under the deepeſt ſenſe of his natural weakneſs and his abſolute dependence upon God, he can yet boldly ſay to himſelf: I am that which God would have me to be; I do that which God wills that I ſhould do; I maintain the poſt that he has aſſigned me, I walk the way that he has preſcribed me, I carry on the work that he has committed to me. I become by little and little that which here on earth I am intended to become. My intellectual capacities and powers are drawn out and kept in exerciſe; my affections are directed ſolely to good, to the beſt objects; I am actuated by the pureſt motives and aiming at the beſt ends; the diſcharge of my duty is ever becoming more eaſy and agreeable to me; the temptations to evil are conſtantly loſing their force upon me; outward things, appearance and glittering ſhow charm and impoſe upon me continually leſs; the revolutions, the viciſſitudes that happen in my outward condition and all around me, perplex, bewilder and alarm me leſs from day to day; my mind riſes conſtantly more above viſible and preſent things, and rejoices more and more in its high deſcent and its high appointment, its communion with God and with the unſeen world. No, I am not receding from the perfection to which I am called as a man and a chriſtian; I am not loſing ſight of the mark of the prize that is ſet before me; it ſhines conſtantly brighter in my view; and I perceive, I ſee that I am perpetually advancing towards it.

it. And how ſatisfied with himſelf and with his condition muſt this render the virtuous man, let his outward circumſtances be ever ſo mean, and his fortunes ever ſo adverſe! And what pleaſure is more pure and laſting, what can diffuſe a ſerener radiance over all the life, over all the path of man, than this ſatisfaction with himſelf!

But when a man is thus animated and bleſſed, my pious hearers, he alſo enjoys fourthly the pleaſure of a free and cheerful intercourſe with his fellow-creatures. And this pleaſure too does virtue procure him, if not alone and excluſively, yet in an eminent degree. The virtuous man is not haunted by envy and ill-will, by pride and vanity, by diſhoneſt ends and ſtratagems, by ſecret reproaches and anxieties; no, wherever he goes he is accompanied by benevolence and love, complacency in whatever is beautiful and good, and delight in all beauty and goodneſs; he is accompanied by a calm and contented heart, a good conſcience, a modeſt aſſurance in the company of his brethren. He comes neither to perſons whom he has injured, affronted, alienated, or whom he intends to hurt, or whoſe diſpleaſure and reſentment he has reaſon to dread; nor to any againſt whom he nouriſhes hatred and animoſity in his heart, whom he cannot abſolutely endure, whom he is not ready to pardon, to ſuccour, to benefit. In his converſe with others he has no need to fear diſgrace or reproaches; has no need to impoſe on himſelf any troubleſome reſtraints,

ſtraints, carefully to veil and to conceal his thoughts and intentions, nor to court protection and reſpect, now under one maſk and then under another. He can, without any hazard, ſhew himſelf as he is, ſpeak as he thinks, act in conformity with his character; and the conſciouſneſs of his integrity, the inward ſenſe of his dignity, diveſts even any unjuſt cenſure or undeſerved neglect, he may occaſionally meet with, of its principal force. The leſs claim he lays to outward diſtinctions, to particular marks of honour; the more he prefers reality to appearance, what is perſonal to what is borrowed, the eſſential to the adventitious, the leſs liable is he to affronts and ſlights in ſociety; the more calmly and fully does he enjoy the amenities of it. The leſs invidiouſly and partially he views all the beautiful and good that others have and do: ſo much the greater ſatisfaction and ſo much the ſurer ſatisfaction does the ſight of it procure him; ſo much greater is conſtantly the preponderance of the ſenſations of pleaſure and of joy over the ſenſations of diſpleaſure and of diſſatisfaction in his heart. He that has ever enjoyed this pleaſure of converſing with his brethren with freedom and vivacity, muſt confeſs it to be very great and deſirable. And who enjoys it ſo pure, ſo complete, as the virtuous man?

Still greater, ſtill ſublimer pleaſures ariſe fifthly to the virtuous man, from his meditations on God, and converſe with him. Boldly and freely can he think on God, the firſt, the greateſt, the moſt perfect

fect being; in filial frankneſs can he converſe with him, as with his father, pray to him, look up to him and employ himſelf in his worſhip. While the wicked man ſtrives to put away from him the thoughts of God, and to obſcure the idea of him in his mind, becauſe he muſt ever tremble before the Almighty and the Juſt as before the judge of his evil actions and deſigns: to the virtuous man theſe thoughts are ever welcome, ever ſoothing and conſoling, and therefore diffuſe ſerenity and ſatisfaction over all that he ſees and hears, that he thinks and does. Since he reveres the will of God as his ſupreme law; ſince he walks before God in piety and ſincerity of heart: ſo he has no need to dread either his diſpleaſure or his judgments. To him it is encouragement and recompenſe to have the Omniſcient and Omnipreſent for the witneſs and judge of his behaviour: and even when he miſtakes or fails, this idea does not confound him, for he knows how righteous, how equitable, how forbearing the judgment of the univerſal parent is, and how exactly all his demands are ſuited to our powers and circumſtances. As ſure as there is a God, may he confidently ſay to himſelf, as ſure as there is a God, a ſupreme inſpector and governor of moral creatures, of mankind, ſo certainly may I aſſure myſelf of his complacency and his approbation; for he knows my heart, he knows that my intentions are ſincere, that I love truth and virtue above all things; that, with all my failings and infirmities, no ſin, no

vice

vice has the dominion over me; that I ſtrive more to acquire intellectual, permanent perfection, than any outward diſtinctions, and that I prefer the benefit of knowing, of loving, of obeying him, my creator and father, and of continually approaching nearer him by wiſdom and virtue, to every other benefit. And to him ſincerity is agreeable; to him integrity is all in all. And how much muſt this aſſurance conſole the virtuous man! With what courage, what confidence muſt it inſpire him on occaſions where others tremble and are diſmayed! With what bliſsful ſenſations muſt it not frequently pervade his heart! From how many troubles and cares defend him! How much ſweeten and enhance to him every other pleaſure!

A ſixth ſource of pleaſure which virtue opens to mankind, and which flows for her friends far more copiouſly than for any others, is the pleaſure of beneficence and of general utility. If the ſelfiſh affections contract the heart of the vicious man, cauſing him to reckon every ſervice he performs to others as a burden, and to regard every benefit he beſtows as a loſs; if he prize and love anything only inaſmuch as it procures him perſonal advantage or ſenſual gratification: yet virtue enlarges and ennobles the heart of him whom ſhe actuates, facilitates every ſervice he performs to his brethren, and converts every benefit he does them into gain. He underſtands, he reveres his appointment; knows that he is deſigned not to live and to act merely for himſelf

himſelf but alſo for others, not only to care and to work for his own, but alſo for the general good; and the more good he does and promotes in his ſtation and according to his relative ſituations, the more he can contribute to the diminution of human miſery and to the augmentation of human happineſs, ſo much the more he rejoices in his deſignation and in the abilities and means that providence has granted him to the accompliſhment of it. And how often, in how many various ways, in what an abundant meaſure may he enjoy this noble, this divine ſatisfaction! How much good, and how many kinds of good may the virtuous perſon do, or give occaſion to, or promote, as a man, as a ſubject, as the head of a family, as a friend, as a worſhipper of God! How much light, how much life, how much comfort, how much content, may he diffuſe around him! How much uſeful influence may he have on others! His ſagacity, his opinions, his example, his aſſiſtance, his prudence, his ſympathy, his intereſt, his indefatigable activity in goodneſs: what may not, what muſt not theſe, mediately and immediately, viſibly and inviſibly, effect upon others and in others, for the preſent and for the future! What good, what precious grain is he ſowing on all ſides, and who can reckon up the fruits, that ſooner or later grow from it! And as he is and does all this, not from affectation, not from oſtentation, but with his whole heart, in deed and in truth; what agreeable ideas and ſenſations, what pure, unadulterated

unadulterated pleaſures muſt it procure him! How conſoling, how recompenſing the thought, that he is acting up to his duty, maintaining his poſt, that he has been of real benefit to human ſociety, that he has wiped away tears from the eyes of the mourner, has ſupported the feeble, relieved the indigent, ſuccoured the miſerable, and promoted the cauſe of truth, of virtue, of religion, of human happineſs, to the utmoſt of his power! What pleaſure is more pure, what have we more in common with the deity, than this?

A no leſs exuberant, indeed an inexhauſtible ſource of pleaſure, which ſtands open to the virtuous man alone, is ſeventhly the bleſſedneſs ariſing from love to God and man. What is love in itſelf and in its effects, but joy; and what love is more fertile in true and laſting, in ever renewing and heart-ſatisfying joy, than the love to God and all mankind? And this love is known, and this bleſſedneſs is enjoyed in all its purity and in its full extent, by the virtuous man alone. Never without joy does he think on God, his father in heaven; never without joy, does he behold mankind his children on earth. He is elated in being a creature, a ſubject, a ſon of the Higheſt; in living under his inſpection and government; in having communion with him; in being guided and conducted by him, and in having him about his path and about his bed, the witneſs of all his ways. He rejoices in all his conſtitutions in nature and in religion, in all his

works

works and ways, in all his ſtatutes and commands; in every veſtige of his wiſdom and goodneſs that he perceives in himſelf and others, in heaven and on earth, in the inanimate and the animate creation; in every inſtance of bounty, in every bleſſing that falls to the lot of himſelf or others; in every ray of light, in every ſpark of life, in every ſource of comfort and ſolace, every means of improvement, every advance towards perfection that he diſcovers in himſelf and others, near him and afar off. He rejoices in all the capacities and powers, all the gifts and endowments, all the bodily and mental excellencies, all the beautiful and good, all the virtues and merits, all the advantages and benefits and pleaſures, which he finds in ſuch great abundance and variety among mankind, his brethren; and when he thinks on their great prediſpoſitions and their high deſtination, when he imagines them all at the goal of perfection and happineſs, and ſees that all is right and good and unſuſceptible of farther correction; then his pleaſure riſes to tranſport, and he enjoys ſomewhat of the felicity of God, who ſurveyed all that he had made, and behold it was very good. And how bleſſed muſt that man be who is animated by ſuch love towards God and man, who learns thus to rejoice in God and man, in all that is and all that will be! What a totally different aſpect muſt the generality of objects thus aſſume in his ſight! How much more cheerful and eaſy may he purſue his way, than the wretches

who, infatuated and hardened by vice, wander about among the works of God and his nobleſt creatures on earth, either with indifferent, unfeeling hearts, or even with an envious, ſullen, cenſorious, murmuring, miſanthropic temper, as if nought were to be ſeen on all ſides but evil and defect and miſery!

To all theſe tranſcendent pleaſures which virtue enſures to man, muſt be added laſtly the animating, glorious proſpects ſhe opens to his view in futurity. To the virtuous man, whoſe virtue is founded on religion and piety, neither the nearer nor the remoter futurity is dreadful. He has no anxiety concerning either the events that await him in the preſent or in the future life. They are all in the diſpoſal of the Allwiſe and Allbountiful, in the diſpoſal of his father in heaven, from whom he can expect nothing but good, from whom he may conſtantly expect the beſt. Yes, on this the virtuous man may continually rely. As certainly as virtue is not an empty name, as certainly as ſhe is a daughter of heaven, and is well-pleaſing to him who dwelleth in heaven: ſo certainly are her ways the road to happineſs in every condition of man, in every period of his life, at every ſtage of his exiſtence. Yes, as ſurely as there is a providence that watches and preſides over all, that never takes the bad for good, nor the good for bad: ſo ſurely may I reckon upon the inſpection, the patronage, the guidance and direction of the Almighty and Supremely bountiful, my father in heaven; ſo certainly

certainly may I be assured that he requires of me nothing impossible, lays no intolerable affliction upon me, that he will never desert or neglect me, that he determines and decrees concerning me nothing but good, under whatever form it may appear; that he conducts all things, the evil as well as the good, sorrows as well as joys, to my real benefit; that he will infallibly lead me to the mark, to the prize of perfection. As certainly as my spirit is immortal; as certainly as another, a higher life awaits us after death: so certainly shall I triumph for ever in my immortality, so certainly shall I be happy in that superior life, and there proceed from perfection to perfection; for of this I feel myself capable, thither even now my principal appetites and affections tend, and the issue of the way of virtue, on which I walk, can, under the government of an all-wise and all-gracious God, be no other than this. And to know this, my dear friends, to be assured of this, how completely must it divest futurity of all its terrors! What glorious prospects does it there unfold to our view! And how much must these prospects beguile and brighten to a man the journey of life! What pleasures and joys must they procure him!

Yes, thus it is, my pious hearers. The ways of virtue are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Virtue is the purest, the richest source of pleasure and happiness. From it already have innumerable persons drawn life and comfort and

joy; and ſtill daily do thouſands and thouſands draw from it theſe bleſſings in full meaſure. Oh be perſuaded of this, my dear friends, and ſeek conſtantly more and more to certify yourſelves of it by your own experience. Venerate and love virtue with all your heart, form yourſelves by her dictates, yield an exact and prompt obedience to all her precepts: and then I promiſe you, in her name and in the name of God who recommends her to us, not indeed riches, not ſuperfluity, not power and majeſty, not groſs carnal voluptuouſneſs; but peace and contentment, but pleaſure, ſolid, diverſified, permanent pleaſure, exceeding every other. This you may as ſurely expect, as ſurely as you devote to her your affection and your ſervice. This you will enjoy in every ſituation, in every ſtate of outward fortune, in every period of life; and never will this pleaſure cauſe you ſatiety or ſurfeit, never will it loſe of its charms; never be a hindrance to you in your duty, never injure your ſpiritual perfection, never draw you off from your appointment, but be perpetually bringing you nearer to both. Yes, the longer you walk the way of virtue; the more carefully and diligently you purſue your courſe along it; the more will you be able from your own experience and from complete conviction to ſay with the wiſe man in our text: Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

SERMON XV.

Why many virtuous Perſons enjoy not more Pleaſure.

GOD, thou haſt created us for happineſs, haſt rendered us ſuſceptible of it, thou inviteſt us to the enjoyment of it, thou haſt opened to us ſources of ſatisfaction and pleaſure not leſs abundant than various in nature and in religion; and it is our own fault, if notwithſtanding we are not happy, if we enjoy not ſatisfaction and pleaſure, and often break out in complaints under the ſentiment of a deficiency in them. Yes, but too frequently we miſtake thy parental voice, and refuſe to hearken to thy gracious invitations. But too often we heedleſsly paſs by the pureſt and richeſt ſources of pleaſure, to ſeek it where it is not to be found. But too often we embitter theſe ſources by numerous failings and tranſgreſſions, or entirely foreclose them by follies and ſins. Yes, Lord, thou art righteous, thou haſt no pleaſure in our miſery and in our ſorrows; but lookeſt down with parental complacency on us thy children when we piouſly

and cheerfully enjoy thy bounties, and live contented in the enjoyment of them. Devout elation and innocent and blithe enjoyment is the principal act of gratitude thou requireſt of us. Oh that we all conſtantly believed and acknowledged this! How eaſy, how agreeable to us would then the way of duty and of virtue be! How ſoon would the generality of our complaints be ſilenced and converted into thankſgivings for thy bounties! What progreſs ſhould we at the ſame time make on the road of perfection and happineſs, and how clearly perceive that it is one and the ſame that leads to both! Oh teach us ever better to know the impediments to the cheerful enjoyment of a virtuous life, and aſſiſt us continually more completely to ſurmount them. Let our preſent reflections on theſe ſubjects be bleſſed to that end, and hearken to our prayer through Jeſus Chriſt our lord, in whoſe name we further addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

WE have lately ſeen, my pious hearers, how various and great the pleaſures are which virtue procures to her followers and friends. They enjoy the conſciouſneſs of their innocence and integrity;

grity; they perceive and feel that truth and order prevail in their ſoul, and in the whole of their conduct; have cauſe to be ſatisfied with themſelves; may converſe frankly and cheerfully with their fellow-creatures; think comfortably and confidently on God; enjoy the ſatisfactions of beneficence and general uſefulneſs; the felicity of love to God and man; and have the faireſt, the moſt glorious proſpects in futurity. As certainly as all theſe are pure and generous pleaſures, ſo certainly are they grounded in the very nature of virtue; ſo do they belong of right to every virtuous perſon, as neceſſary effects and conſequences of it, and cannot well be ſeparated, at leaſt in idea, from his character and his conduct. However, there are perſons, who cannot but be reckoned virtuous, and yet have either no ſhare at all in thoſe pleaſures, or only enjoy them in a very inferior degree; perſons who with very good diſpoſitions, are nevertheleſs rather gloomy than gay, rather ſad than joyful, and who are heard to complain and lament more than to call themſelves happy. How does this agree with the poſition we have maintained? Is the rule liable to exceptions? Does virtue grant only to ſome of her votaries and friends, but not to all, what ſhe promiſes to beſtow upon them? No, my dear friends, her nature and qualities are invariably the ſame; her energy, her activity, is uniform; ſhe performs what ſhe promiſes, and is not in fault for any deficiency of pleaſure. The reaſons, the

moſt various and moſt cogent reaſons for pleaſure, are always, are indiſſolubly connected with a virtuous and pious life; the richeſt ſources of it ſtand perpetually open to the man who diligently purſues ſuch a tenour of conduct; everything authorizes him, everything invites him to draw from theſe ſources, and to derive from them felicity and joy. But, beſides that the enjoyment of pleaſure, by ſuch limited creatures as we are, cannot be always equally vigorous and lively, ſo with numbers of otherwiſe well diſpoſed perſons it will be diminiſhed and impeded by many inward and outward cauſes, which have their foundation, not in virtue, but merely in human weakneſs and frailty. And on this, my pious hearers, let us at preſent the more attentively reflect, as we are all ſo much concerned in diſcovering and obviating the obſtacles to our pleaſure. Let us therefore inquire into the cauſes why the pleaſures of virtue are not enjoyed by all virtuous perſons, and perhaps only by a few are enjoyed in a high degree and in full meaſure.

Frequently an infirm, a more or leſs diſordered ſtate of health is the cauſe that the virtuous man does not lead ſo pleaſant and cheerful a life as it might juſtly be expected he ſhould; the cauſe of this weakly and diſordered ſtate may moreover lie in the natural frame of the body, or in diſaſtrous accidents, or in an antecedent irregularity of conduct: The conſequences of which always weaken the ſenſibility to pleaſure, or diſturb and interrupt the

the enjoyment of it. Thence not unfrequently a variety of painful or otherwiſe diſagreeable ſenſations, ſpontaneouſly ariſe within, which obſcure the agreeable images of the mind, or entirely obliterate them. Frequently ſuch circumſtances confine the exertion of our abilities, our activity in goodneſs, and likewiſe our ſatisfaction in ſuch works as we have happily completed, in the relief and ſervice we may have afforded to others. Virtue may indeed alleviate to us theſe troubles and ſufferings; ſhe can teach us, inaſmuch as they are diſpenſations of God, to view them in a more agreeable light, ſhe can teach us to make a ſalutary uſe of them; but ſhe can neither entirely remove nor reverſe them. Let this teach you, my pious hearers, the value of health in regard to the nobleſt the moſt exalted pleaſures of man; and if you, who now enjoy this benefit, and are ſtill in the flower of your age, if you wiſh to lead a truly contented and cheerful life in the ſervice of virtue, and to experience all the bleſſings ſhe beſtows: oh then let the preſervation of your health and your faculties be recommended to you, not only as a duty, but as the means to vivacity of mind and the moſt diverſified pleaſures; and be perſuaded that you can make no ſacrifice to moderation, eſpecially in the early part of life, for which you will not afterwards be repaid a hundred fold.

Another cauſe why many perſons do not at all, or not completely enjoy the pleaſure that virtue ſhould afford them, are the ſtill uneffaced impreſ-

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ſions of their early education; and the erroneous example by which they were brought up. He that has been educated and inſtructed by pious indeed but too ſevere and too little enlightened parents and tutors; he that, in the firſt years of his nurture, had about him perſons, honeſt indeed, but of a baſhful, retired and anxious diſpoſition; he who perceives that although both the one and the other do nothing bad and omit nothing good, yet act more from conſtraint than with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, more obſequiouſly than ingenuouſly and with graceful eaſe; who always hears more talk of ſacrifice and ſelf-denial, of croſſes and ſufferings, of renunciation and deſtitution for the ſake of goodneſs; to whom the danger of ſinning and of falling ſhort of the mark of perfection, is repeatedly magnified, the preſent world ſo often diſplayed on its contemptible ſide, and the lot of the pious in it as generally woeful and calamitous: he may indeed learn to honour virtue and to hearken to her precepts; but ſeldom will ſhe thoroughly gain his affection, and ſtill ſeldomer will he experience the entire felicity of her ſervice. She will always in his eyes have more the appearance of an auſtere imperious miſtreſs, than of a mild obliging friend. He will ever be actuated more by ſervile than by filial ſentiments; will often torment himſelf with groundleſs ſcruples and doubts, often be in dread of imaginary dangers, will always prefer the extreme of lenity in his judgments and his behaviour, and be too apt to think himſelf incapable or unworthy

worthy of the pleaſure that virtue offers him, or afraid to ſurrender himſelf too much to the enjoyment of it. Let theſe remarks ſerve as a warning to ſuch of you as are parents, preceptors and tutors! Strive to render virtue no leſs amiable than reſpectable to your children, your ſcholars and pupils, ſo ſoon as they are capable of knowing and feeling any thing of it. Make them acquainted with it at once as the ſureſt guide to happineſs, as the beſt comforter, as the only diſpenſer of joy to man. Never ſpeak to them without cheerfulneſs, without heartfelt complacency, of her demands and effects. Practiſe her precepts never but with readineſs and ſatisfaction in their preſence, and let them ſee and remark that you are never more contented and gay, than when you have done or promoted ſome good. Endeavour at the ſame time to give them right notions of God, of the world and of the preſent life; and accuſtom them nowhere to overlook the beautiful and good, and to view all things in the mild and benign light that wiſdom and religion diffuſe around them. So will virtue and pleaſure, duty and joy, always more intimately be connected in their ideas and apprehenſions, and in the ſequel of their lives the more ſurely excite and accompany each other.

A third but too common cauſe why many a friend of virtue ſo little knows and ſo ſparingly enjoys the pleaſures that ſhould belong to him, is a too defective, too often violated virtue. He that is not fully

fully decided in favour of virtue, and has not entirely devoted himſelf to her ſervice; he that does not proceed firmly and intrepidly along the way ſhe ſhews him, but is ſtill ever and anon looking back with ſecret pleaſure to his former deviations, and indulges himſelf in them for a longer or a ſhorter time; he therefore who oftener or ſeldomer, acts againſt his conſcience, omits or neglects his duty, allows himſelf in greater or ſmaller irregularities and treſpaſſes, or relapſes into the ſins and frailties that formerly ſwayed him: he cannot indeed, with all his other good qualities and endeavours, always, can never entirely, never in full meaſure, enjoy the delights of virtue. There is yet too much verſatility and inconſiſtency in his character and his behaviour, and he has too ſeldom reaſon to be thoroughly ſatisfied with himſelf, with what he is and does. And virtue will not laviſh her favours on inconſtant and fickle friends. She is jealous of her rights; ſhe requires undivided love. The reliſh of her joys pre-ſuppoſes ſuſceptibility, and that, with ſuch a viciſſitude of light and darkneſs, of zeal and negligence, is extremely ſmall. No, my dear friends, would ye be thoroughly capable of the pleaſures of virtue; would ye have them to your portion; form yourſelves entirely after her mind, follow every ſuggeſtion ſhe gives you, and obſerve all her precepts with unremitted care and unſhaken fidelity. You muſt firſt ſow and plant before you can reap; firſt be confirmed

confirmed in the love of goodneſs and be expert in the practice of it, before you have a right to demand all the benefits ariſing from it. The more acquainted and familiar you are with virtue; the longer you have remained in her ſervice, the more you have done and ſacrificed for her; the more worthily you maintain the character of her votaries and friends: the more ſurely and completely will ſhe enable you to reliſh all the joys and bleſſings which we can ever promiſe ourſelves in her company and converſe.

A fourth and that the moſt fertile cauſe why many good perſons do not enjoy the pleaſures of virtue in that degree which they might and ſhould, are various prejudices, various falſe or miſtaken notions concerning the moſt important objects. Theſe are, wrong notions of God; wrong notions of virtue; wrong notions of pleaſure; wrong notions of the end and aim of the preſent life; wrong notions of the ſpirit and views of chriſtianity. Let us more nearly inſpect theſe ſeveral obſtructions to blithe and genial virtue, in order that we may be able to avoid them.

The firſt that preſent themſelves, then, are unjuſt or falſe conceptions of God which diminiſh the enjoyment of the pleaſures of virtue with ſuch numbers of perſons. God requires of us virtue, and he is the author of all our happineſs. How much then muſt depend on the ideas we form of him! And how gloomy, how much more adapted to excite apprehenſion

apprehenſion and terror than love and confidence are theſe conceptions of deity with many otherwiſe well meaning perſons! But too often they conceive of God merely as the Eternal, the Infinite, the Almighty, the Supreme, the perfectly Holy; feel in all its extent the immenſe interval that is between him and them; ſink as it were under the preſſure of this ſentiment; and withal forget that he is at the ſame time, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, the Supremely benign and merciful, that he is eſſential love. But too often they conceive of him as an auſtere maſter, as an inexorable judge and avenger, ever inclined to puniſh not only every ſin and every crime, but every failing and infirmity; and are far too much affrighted at his rigid juſtice, which is however nothing elſe but wiſe kindneſs, to be able to ſoothe and cheer themſelves in the conſciouſneſs of a defective virtue and an imperfect obedience, which yet all human virtue and all human obedience is. But too often they imagine that God iſſues his commands to mankind rather as a proof of his ſovereign authority over them, than for the advancement of their happineſs; and therefore they ſo ſeldom cheerfully comply with them, and are ſo ſeldom truly happy in the obſervance of them. Be upon your guard againſt theſe miſtaken notions, my dear friends, as you would obey God with delight, or, which is the ſame thing, if you would enjoy the pleaſures of virtue. Learn to know and to revere the deity as a ſovereign who preſcribes laws

laws to his ſubjects ſolely for their own good, and exactly proportions his demands to their circumſtances and abilities. Learn to think of him as an inſpector and judge, who requires only ſincerity and rectitude, but not faultleſs perfection; and whoſe inſpection and judgment is not terrible but comfortable, to the honeſt and ſincere, though they have a lively ſenſe of their frailties and defects. Learn to know and to love him as the Father, the kind, the tender, the condeſcending, the indulgent father of mankind, who intends the welfare of all his children upon earth, who has deſigned them not for ſorrow, but for joy, not for miſery, but for happineſs, by all his commands intends merely to guide them to that object, and looks down upon them with paternal complacency when they enjoy ſatisfaction and pleaſure on the path of duty and of virtue. Be concerned to have a deeper ſenſe of his amiable and venerable perfections, a more lively faith in his promiſes, and a ſtronger determination of will to his ſervice. Conſider him as the inexhauſtible fount of light, of good, of happineſs; as acting in the joint characters of father, friend and governour, imparting an endleſs variety of bleſſings to his rational offspring, and ſupplying them with everything neceſſary to the full completion of their happineſs. By the divine bleſſing on ſuch conſiderations your minds will be more open to the perception of truth, and habitually diſpoſed to love and adore him, who is great and amiable beyond all compariſon,

compariſon, beyond all comprehenſion; in whom perfect power, wiſdom and goodneſs eſſentially dwell, and perpetually act in the moſt conſummate harmony. To contemplate the deity in theſe views, and to cultivate theſe diſpoſitions towards him, will be the beſt, the moſt delightful employment of your nobleſt powers, will render you increaſingly virtuous and happy through all the riſing gradations of an endleſs duration.

Not leſs detrimental to the cheerful enjoyment of the pleaſures of virtue are ſecondly the unjuſt, the falſe ideas that are formed of virtue itſelf. What is it elſe, in the ſight and in the judgment of numbers of perſons, but another name for auſterity and abſtinence, an abſtinence from the innocent pleaſures and accommodations of life; for perpetual renunciation of all that we prize and love, that is valuable and dear to us, an abnegation of our moſt natural inſtincts, appetites and affections? What is it in their eyes but a grievous conſtraint put upon them; an anxious ſolicitude about every ſtep and motion, a ſolemn pondering of every word and action; a continual ſtruggle and conflict with oneſelf and with external objects? How can we thus be enamoured of virtue? How can there be any ſatisfaction in following her precepts pretendedly ſo auſtere? But how erroneous is this idea! How much is virtue disfigured and diſhonoured by it! No ſhe is nothing leſs than ſuch a hideous ſpectre, than ſuch a tyrannical miſtreſs, than ſuch a cruel diſturber.

Doubtleſs

Doubtleſs ſhe demands abſtinence of us, but only from hurtful, ignominious, diſgraceful things and actions; and if ſhe do demand abſtinence of us on one ſide, on the other ſhe teaches us enjoyment, the grateful, bland enjoyment of all the beautiful and good that God has beſtowed on us and others, and with which he has repleniſhed the world. If ſhe preſcribe to us ſelf-denial, it is not that we ſhould do violence to our natural appetites and affections, but only renounce whatever is at enmity with our nature and our happineſs, what debaſes and deſtroys the former, and weakens and diſturbs the latter. If ſhe at times lay us under reſtraint in this or the other particular, it is only in the view to help us to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of true liberty, or to ſecure us in it. If ſhe rouze us to vigilance and caution, it is not to inſpire us with anxious and ſervile dread, but to promote our ſafety and repoſe. If we are forced at times to fight in her ſervice and to take up arms againſt ourſelves, it is but rarely that we have occaſion to reſiſt, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, even to blood; and this warfare is for the moſt part only haraſſing to the novice in virtue, but not to him who has learnt to rule himſelf and to overcome the world, and to this conflict ſucceeds ſooner or later conqueſt, and the placid, the bleſſed enjoyment of victory. No, my pious hearers, form not ſuch miſtaken notions of virtue, take her for what ſhe really is, if you would reliſh and enjoy her pleaſures. Virtue is pure

truth and order, freedom and ſtrength of mind; tranquillity and contentedneſs of heart. Virtue is the predominant affection for all that is true and beautiful and right and expedient, with the continual aptitude and endeavour to do and to promote whatever is in conformity with it, and this muſt ſurely be much eaſier than its oppoſite, much more natural and agreeable to the uncorrupted man, or the man improved by religion.

A third claſs of falſe or but partially true ideas, that diſturb mankind in the cheerful enjoyment of the pleaſure of virtue relates to the pleaſure itſelf, its real quality and its moral worth. Either we expect from virtue pleaſures which ſhe does not promiſe, and which ſhe cannot diſpenſe; or we do not ſufficiently underſtand and appretiate thoſe which are proper to her; or we are prepoſſeſſed againſt pleaſure in general. One while we expect virtue to yield us nothing but very ſenſible, lively, raviſhing pleaſures; a ſtate in which one agreeable, bliſsful ſenſation preſſes upon the other, and the heart ſinks as it were under a ſucceſſion of extatic tranſports; and if this does not enſue, as, from the limitation of our nature and our dependance on numberleſs outward things, it is impoſſible it ſhould, we find ourſelves deceived, and our belief in the pleaſures of a virtuous and religious conduct is unhinged. At another time we are too much habituated to the pleaſures of ſenſe, aſcribe to them too great, an excluſive worth, have not yet a ſuf-

ficient reliſh for mental, moral pleaſures, for the pleaſures of reflection, of devotion, of ſilent meditation, which yet are the pureſt and ſublimeſt of all; and foraſmuch as virtue encourages and promotes theſe greatly more than the former, is concerned far more for the perfection of our ſpirit than for the gratification of our ſenſes; ſo we fail of enjoying in her ſervice that ſatisfaction which we had promiſed ourſelves from it. Sometimes in ſhort, we look upon pleaſure in general as a dangerous affair, as not properly comporting with the gravity of a philoſopher, of a virtuous man, of a chriſtian, and therefore regard with a ſuſpicious eye whatever preſents itſelf under that name and in that ſhape. Be upon your guard, my pious hearers, againſt theſe miſtaken notions, if you would be as happy as you may be by virtue. Expect from it no pleaſures, no joys, no happineſs incompatible with our preſent condition, of which we at preſent are not capable. Learn to prefer calm repoſe and inward content to every boiſterous amuſement however faſcinating. Purify, refine your taſte; be conſtantly elevating yourſelves more and more above what only charms and exhilarates the animal man; give ſcope to your feelings of the dignity and the high appointment of your ſpirit, and ſtudy ever more and more highly to prize whatever promotes its perfection and contentment. At the ſame time contemn no pleaſure if it be innocent, if it be not hurtful to yourſelf or others; rather enjoy it

with a gladſome mind; and be aſſured, that the cheerful and moderate enjoyment of it diſhonours no creature that God has deſigned for happineſs; that ſerioufneſs and joy may well ſubſiſt together, and that even wiſdom and virtue are no ſmall gainers by this connection.

Wrong notions of the end and deſign of the preſent life compoſe a fourth claſs of prejudices that hinder or diſturb many well-diſpoſed perſons in the complete enjoyment of the pleaſure that virtue might procure them. Whoever repreſents to himſelf this earth, a caſe by no means unfrequent, as in ſome ſort a place of baniſhment, as a joyleſs vale of tears, as the peculiar reſidence of affliction and miſery; whoever apprehends this life to be a place of ſuch diſcipline and preparation as is merely diſcipline and preparation, to the excluſion of all real enjoyment, juſt ſuſtaining us with the hopes of the future, and fitting us for the enjoyment of it; whoever perſuades himſelf, that here not only our principal or entire happineſs is not, but that no real happineſs at all is to be looked for or to be found: he will indeed be conſtantly more diſpoſed to view all things on their gloomy ſide, to fix his attention more on the evil than on the good, and to be more feelingly alive to the former than the latter, becauſe he is conſtantly expecting that, and holds this, if not for impoſſible, at leaſt to be extremely rare. How therefore can the avenues of his heart ſtand open to the pleaſures which virtue offers

offers him, how can it thoroughly apprehend their value and calmly reſign itſelf to the enjoyment of them? No, form to yourſelves juſter notions of what man is and is deſigned to be. Already here he is in a province of the kingdom of God, which is adorned with a thouſand beauties and benefits, all inviting him to enjoyment. Already here he is deſigned to reap a part of the fruits of his labour, already here enjoy true happineſs, though the full harveſt, the higher and higheſt happineſs, await him not till after this life. Already this ſubordinate ſtage of his exiſtence conſiſts of ends as well as means conducing to ultimate ends of a ſuperior order; he is here, not merely and alone for the ſake of the future, but alſo for the ſake of the preſent; and godlineſs, religious virtue, has as well the promiſes of the preſent as of the future life. Remember, that joy or rejoicing, is properly a maſculine and ſevere thing; the recreation of the judgment, the jubilee of reaſon.

Laſtly, my pious hearers, the cheerful enjoyment of the pleaſures of virtue by no means militates with the ſpirit and views of chriſtianity. On this head we too often confound times and circumſtances, applying that to all chriſtians which was only meant of ſome, and principally of the firſt confeſſors of Jeſus. Thus, when the way of chriſtion virtue is repreſented in the goſpel to be narrow and toilſome; when the diſciples of our lord are required to take up their croſs and to follow him in

ſufferings; when it is ſaid, that the pious muſt through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God; when we find it written, he that would live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſecution: it is but too common thence to infer that true chriſtians ſhould in a manner renounce all pleaſure, that they ſhould be more obnoxious to calamities and troubles than other men, and ſhould be content to paſs their lives in grief and affliction. But true as this was in regard to very many of the firſt diſciples and followers of Jeſus, yet it can never be applicable to more peaceful times, like ours, and neither does it reſult from the ſpirit and deſign of chriſtianity. No, if chriſtianity require a greater and purer virtue of us than of other men, it alſo promiſes and yields us greater and purer joys. If at times it demand of us the ſacrifice of ſome outward intereſt, it compenſates this loſs by the gain of far nobler advantages. Beſides the whole of its tenour and purport is calculated to encourage mankind and not to deject them, to inſpire them with courage and confidence, not with fear and alarm, to ſooth not to ruffle their mind, to open to them new ſources of pleaſure, and to purify and render more abundant thoſe that they already have. Make not ſhipwreck of your faith; enjoy all things with thankſgiving and confidence; be ever elated in mind; be of good cheer even in tribulations; rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I ſay, rejoice; the kingdom of God conſiſts not in meats and drinks,

but

but in righteouſneſs, peace and joy in the holy ghoſt; this is the language, this the true ſpirit of chriſtianity, and it is our own fault if we miſapprehend it, and then complain of the want of ſatisfaction and pleaſure.

And theſe, my pious hearers, are the principal cauſes that the pleaſures of virtue are not enjoyed by all virtuous perſons, and perhaps only by a ſmall portion of them in a high degree and in full meaſure. Virtue is therefore perfectly innocent of this defect. She is and remains the moſt bountiful diſpenſer of joy to man; but ſhe obtrudes not her bleſſings upon him. She offers them to him; ſhe invites him to the enjoyment of them; but he muſt not miſtake them, muſt not ſhut his heart againſt their influence, muſt not render himſelf incapable of enjoying them by an erroneous behaviour or prejudice. And ſurely, my dear friends, theſe pleaſures of virtue highly deſerve to be ſought after by us, that we ſhould take pains to obtain them, that we ſhould be ever making ourſelves more ſuſceptible of them, that we ſhould carefully obviate everything that may raviſh them from us, that may weaken them, that may render them leſs delicious to us: and the more diligent we are in all theſe reſpects, the more ſurely will our expectations be fulfilled; the more experiences and the more bleſſed experiences ſhall we have of the truth of our text: The ways of virtue are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

SERMON XVI.

The Value of Religion in General.

GOD, creator and father of mankind, never ought we to aſſemble in thy worſhip, never lift up our eyes and our hearts to thee, without feeling the value of the happineſs, the ineſtimable happineſs with which thou haſt favoured us as thinking, rational, moral creatures capable of communion with thee! Yes, that we can raiſe our minds to thee, the firſt, the greateſt, the moſt perfect of all beings; can know thee, know thee as our creator and father; that we can love thee, rejoice in thee, entirely repoſe in thee, reſign ourſelves entirely to thee, rely firmly on thee, continually expect the beſt from thee, and can do all this as chriſtians with confidence and ſatisfaction: what happineſs, what felicity! How it dignifies our nature! How brilliant the proſpects it opens to us in the remoteſt periods of futurity! Ah, God, what darkneſs would ſurround us, what doubts, what terrors would haunt us in life and in death, were we obliged to

ſeek

ſeek after thee with anxious uncertainty and yet not be able to find thee; if the light of true religion did not enlighten us and guide us on the road of happineſs! And how confidently may we now purſue our path of life! How cheerful and contented travel onwards! How undauntedly behold its end approaching! Yes, this is life eternal, eternal happineſs, that we know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent! Eternally praiſed be thy bounty, o merciful Father, for having brought us to this knowledge, for having ſo glorioufly revealed thyſelf to us by all thy works, by thy ſon Jeſus; that through him thou art come ſo near, art ſo viſible to us! Oh that we might never fail of perceiving the value of theſe graces; have a conſtant and lively ſenſe of them and conſtantly apply them to the beſt the worthieſt uſe! How wiſe, how virtuous, how happy ſhould we be! How rapidly, how ſecurely proceed from perfection to perfection; ah then do thou deign to add grace to grace, benefaction to benefaction. Let the boon which thou haſt granted us by religion, be ever increaſing in important, in more ſalutary effects to our ſouls. Let us always more experimentally feel its power to our improvement and tranquillity, and ever become capable and partakers of greater felicity. In this behalf bleſs the meditations we are now to begin upon it. Let the diſcourſe of thy ſervant find admiſſion into the hearts of his hearers,

and

and make deep and laſting impreſſions on them. We aſk it as the followers of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee further in his name: Our father, &c.

JOHN xvii. 3.

This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.

RELIGION, my devout audience, — I ſpeak of true religion, founded on reaſon and revelation, — religion is very differently judged of by different perſons. One man deems it of little or no value, and another eſteems it beyond all price. The former holds it to be a troubleſome and fruitleſs employment of the mind; while the latter maintains it to be the moſt important, the moſt bleſſed concernment of the heart and life. To the former it is a heavy and oppreſſive yoke, which he endeavours by all means to ſhake off, a grievous reſtraint upon his freedom and inclinations, a common diſturber, whom he keeps aloof from as far as he can; to the latter it is a gentle monitor, a beneficent generous friend and comforter, the moſt fertile ſource of ſatisfaction and joy. The former therefore meddles but ſeldom with it, confines it to certain times and places, and finds neither comfort nor benefit in it; the latter never loſes it out of ſight, makes it his conſtant companion and guide along

along the dubious journey of life, and is continually receiving refreſhment, pleaſure and aſſiſtance from it.

And we, my dear friends, to which of theſe two claſſes of perſons do we belong? What is religion to us? How much value has it in our eſtimation? Of what importance is it to our heart? What influence has it on our lives? At leaſt we cannot be altogether indifferent about it; otherwiſe we ſhould not frequent the aſſemblies of the devoted ſervants of God and Chriſt; ſhould there diſcover neither attention nor ſentiment; and not do many things which we now do, nor neglect many others which we now neglect. But whether we perceive it in all its worth; whether we revere it as the moſt precious boon of heaven; whether we prize it as highly as it deſerves; whether it be as dear, as profitable, and as comfortable to us, as it might and ſhould; are queſtions which I can only anſwer for myſelf, and not for others. Religion is to me the moſt important, the moſt indiſpenſable, the moſt exalted object of which I can frame an idea, the greateſt largeſs for which I ſtand indebted to heaven. It guides me more ſafely than any other light; it affords me more utility and comfort, makes me more contented and blithe, than any other knowledge or ſcience, privilege or poſſeſſion, is able to do. Nor can I once forget its value, or in the ſmalleſt degree depart from its directions to virtue and happineſs, without ſuffering manifold ſpoliation and detriment.

May this, my dear friends, be the judgment paſſed by all of you, from inward conviction and experience, on the value of religion! For this valuation preciſely ſuits it, and every one that rightly apprehends and ſincerely follows its precepts, muſt and will find it prove what I have pronounced it to be. Every one will confeſs, with our ſaviour in the text: This is life eternal, this is indeed the way to true felicity, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent! However, let us examine the matter itſelf impartially, let us ponder the value of religion. This will confirm its votaries in the juſt judgment they paſs upon it, and perhaps inſpire even its ſcorners with a deference for it. There are two particulars whereon to this end we ſhould reflect.

The firſt is, how our religion ſhould be framed, and how we ſhould be diſpoſed towards it, that it may be of really great value to us. The other, whence it obtains this value, or wherein it conſiſts.

Religion that is founded on error, and degenerates into dire ſuperſtition; religion which conſiſts in empty rites and ceremonies, or in the ſterile belief of incomprehenſible things; religion, which employs the underſtanding merely as a ſcience, as a theory of certain phænomena in the phyſical and moral world, but leaves the heart unimproved and untranquillized; religion which is not entirely moral, not immediately directed to the improvement of mankind, or is even favourable to ſin and vice:

vice: ſuch a religion has indeed no value; and far be it from me to praiſe it for its excellency, or to ſay a word in its behalf. No, that religion alone which is built upon truth; which teaches us to know God and our relations to him, and to think and live conformably to it; which ſupplies our manifold wants; which renders us wiſer and better, and is adapted and pointed in all its parts to our perfection and happineſs: this alone has any real worth, this alone has any title to our profound veneration and moſt cordial love. And of this kind is whatever we learn from the contemplation of the univerſe, and by rational meditation concerning God and the proper end of man; of this kind is that, in particular, which God himſelf has revealed to us of himſelf and his will, by his ſon Jeſus. This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.

But in order that this true, particularly that the chriſtian religion, which we revere as the moſt expreſs and perfect medium of revelation, may poſſeſs that worth and excellence for us, or in reference to us, before all things we muſt underſtand it. We muſt form juſt and clear conceptions of its contents, of its views, of its doctrines, precepts, promiſes. Neither the name, nor the confeſſion of religion, nor a blind veneration for it, will make us the wiſer and better and happier. It does not operate upon us like a magical charm, without our knowledge or concurrence, but only

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in proportion as we underſtand it, reflect upon it, and effectually practiſe it. Attend therefore, o man, attend in this deſign to the voice of God in nature, to the voice of thy creator and father, who ſpeaks to thee in all his works; and adhere to the writings of the evangeliſts and apoſtles, who deliver to thee the doctrine of Jeſus in its primitive ſimplicity and purity. If thou grant an attentive audience to that voice, and draw truth from theſe living ſprings, then will religion appear to thee free from all human commixtures and appendages, will appear to thee under the moſt venerable form, in her majeſtic unvarniſhed beauty, as a daughter of heaven, whom the Father has ſent to mankind for their conſolation upon earth.

Are we farther deſirous that religion ſhould be really and eminently valuable to us, we muſt be aſſured of its truth, of its celeſtial origin. We muſt believe it, and believe it on principle, with ſatisfying certainty. So long as I remain doubtful in this reſpect; ſo long as I take its doctrines for only probable conjectures, its precepts for well-meant uſeful rules of life, its promiſes for deſirable events; ſo long may I eaſily eſteem and admire it to a certain degree, and it may have a certain influence on my ſentiments and my conduct: but I ſhall not experience its whole force to my improvement and pacification; I ſhall not become ſo good and ſo happy as I may and ſhould, till I recognize its doctrines to be truths of demonſtration, its precepts

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the laws of my paramount ſovereign and judge, and its promiſes as infallible aſſurances of the true and unchangeable God. This belief only then makes religion intrinſically ſacred and important to me; this belief only then gives it the reſpect and authority it neceſſarily ought to have, when I adopt it as the regulator of my heart and the guide of my life.

Yet even this is not enough. Would we have it to be to us, and to perform for us, what it is ordained to be and to perform, then muſt we not only underſtand and believe it, but ſuffer ourſelves to be actually led and conducted by it. We muſt follow its directions to virtue and happineſs, be animated by its ſpirit, and ſquare our whole behaviour by its precepts. Religion requires obedient and teachable diſciples: ſhe inſtructs, ſhe improves, ſhe conſoles us, but not againſt our will and without our co-operation. To our mind, always inquiſitive and panting after reſt, ſhe offers the moſt ſalutary food; but we muſt taſte and enjoy this food, if we would have it to ſtrengthen and refreſh us. She would lead us by the hand on the path of virtue and happineſs; but we muſt actually walk that path, and purſue it with a firm and ſteady ſtep, if we would have her for our companion, and be encouraged by her aſſiſtance. She promiſes us light, help and conſolation; but we muſt accept and uſe that light, that help, that ſupport, if we would profit by her offers. Wouldſt

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thou then learn how properly to eſtimate the value of religion, o man, ſurrender thyſelf wholly to her direction, ſubmit thyſelf to her guidance at all times, in all places, under all events. Think conſtantly as ſhe teaches thee to think; do conſtantly that which ſhe orders thee to do; abide ſtedfaſtly by that which ſhe tells thee and promiſes thee on the part of God. Separate not from her in thy ordinary, thy daily courſe of life. Confine her not to the times and places conſecrated to the offices of devotion. Make her not merely thy laſt reſource and comforter in diſtreſs. She deſpiſes the votaries and friends, who only flee to her in misfortune, in liſtleſs melancholy hours, but drop all acquaintance with her when ſucceſs ſmiles upon them. No, ſhe muſt be thy counſellor in all thy undertakings and affairs, thy companion in ſolitude and in ſociety, thy intimate and boſom friend in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death! Then wilt thou recognize her entire worth, and receive more ſubſtantial benefit from her, than from anything whatever beſides that has a tendency to ſoothe and exhilarate mankind.

And how great, my dear friends, how great indeed, is the value of religion to him who thus underſtands it, thus truſts to it, thus reduces it to practice, and thus intimately blends it with his whole ſyſtem of thought and ſenſation! Oh could I repreſent to you her value, as I feel it myſelf, and render her as important to your minds and

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your hearts, as ſhe is to me! It is religion that makes me wiſe; ſhe makes me good; ſhe makes me contented and cheerful; ſhe teaches me how to uſe and enjoy the preſent; ſhe opens to me the lovelieſt proſpects in futurity, there promiſes me higher, eternal felicity, and renders me actually qualified for it. Knowledge of truth, inclination and ability to good, a calm, contented heart, moderation in proſperity, comfort and reſolution in adverſity, hope and aſſurance in life and in death: theſe are thy gifts, o religion, and how precious, how indiſpenſable to my happineſs!

Yes, religion makes me wiſe; it leads me to the knowledge of truth, the moſt important, the moſt indiſpenſable, the moſt ſacred truth! Without her, I ſhould walk in darkneſs, wander to and fro in a labyrinth of doubt, ignorant of my origin, miſtaking my object; all that ſurrounds me, all that happens to me and to others, would be a myſtery, an inexplicable myſtery to me. Effects without cauſes, means without end, faculties without adequate objects, numberleſs ſeries and conſequences of things deſtitute of an intelligible connection, beauty and order produced from chance; virtue and vice, life and death at inceſſant ſtrife; moral creatures without controul, an immenſe univerſe without a governor and ruler: ſuch would be the appearance of viſible things to me, and how muſt ſuch a view diſtract my mind! In what a dreadful abyſs of doubt and deſpondency muſt it overwhelm

me! Loſt among the innumerable multiplicity of things which belong to this univerſe, alone and abandoned amidſt all the living creatures that ſurround me, I ſhould have nothing whereon to fix; nothing wherein to truſt; nothing that could lead me with ſafety in my thoughts and purſuits; nothing that I could conſider as the fixt object of my wiſhes, my deſires, my endeavours; nothing that could unite me with other beings and things! Like a child, which cruelty or accident had abandoned on its birth, I ſhould not know to whom I was beholden for my being and my life, from whom I might expect the ſupport of it, who would adopt me, to whom I might look up for protection and help and parental love!

But thou, o divine religion, thou freeſt me from this diſtreſſing perplexity; thou leadeſt me forth from this labyrinth of doubt; guideſt me in the way of truth and aſſurance. Thou teacheſt me to know my God, and the ſacred relations in which I ſtand to him. Thou giveſt an author, a preſerver, a ruler, a father, to me and to the univerſe; and thus diffuſeſt light over all things, combineſt all together, reduceſt all to life and order, giveſt importance and dignity to all. I now perceive that I am no longer abandoned and forlorn in the immenſity of ſpace; am no longer a pitiable atom, the ſport of diverſe and caſual impulſes of chance or fate; no longer an inſignificant, feeble, wretched creature, dependant on nothing, ignorant of its

origin and end; wandering, without protector or guide, through the wilderneſs of life, this day or the next to become a prey to death. Under thy directions I have diſcovered God, have found in him a father, the wiſeſt, the beſt of fathers, who knows and loves me; and I am his creature, his child, am formed after his likeneſs, am capable of his correſpondence, am and live and ſubſiſt in him and by him; underſtand to what purpoſe he has faſhioned and ordained me; dwell under his inſpection and care; know his tender diſpoſitions towards me, and nothing can deſtroy the bleſſed connection which unites me with him, the Immutable and Eternal.

And how differently now does every object appear to me! What a totally different, what a brighter and more cheerful aſpect does the world now wear to me, and how its magnificence and beauty exalt and rejoice my ſpirit! Now I know and revere a firſt, eternal, ſupremely perfect cauſe of all that is and was and will be; a God from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; a God praiſed and magnified by every particle of matter, every plant, every beaſt, every man, every ſpirit, the heavens and the earth, as the Almighty, the Allwiſe, as him who is eſſential love. I now behold, on all ſides, as far as my eye ſurveys and my penetration can extend, one continued ſcene of beauty, ſymmetry and order; all around me the wiſeſt, the moſt benevolent deſigns,

and the fitteſt means for their accompliſhment; on all ſides life and joy and happineſs, here in tendency and in bud, there in bloom and in maturity. Now all things depend in the cloſeſt and moſt intimate union on each other, the ſmall and the great, the viſible and the inviſible, the grain of ſand on the ſea-ſhore and the allcheering orb of day; all is the work of one ſole, ſupremely perfect mind; all form but one whole; in which the natural and the moral, the good and the bad, the preſent and the future, are indiſſolubly knit and interwoven together; in which nothing is unneceſſary, nothing redundant, nothing unintended, nothing abſolutely bad and hurtful; a whole, ſupported and maintained, diſpoſed and guided by its infinite author himſelf, and wherein all is tending to the greateſt poſſible perfection and happineſs. And to know this, to be aſſured of theſe moſt ſublime, moſt fruitful, moſt comfortable truths, as the clue to our reflections and reſearches, as the rule of our behaviour, as the ground of our deſires and hopes, is this not wiſdom? is it not greater, ſublimer wiſdom, than all elſe that bears the name? And muſt not the religion which leads us to this wiſdom, be of ineſtimable value to us? muſt it not be the moſt venerable boon of heaven?

As religion makes me wiſe, my pious hearers, it alſo renders me good; and this is a ſecond proof of its ſuperior worth and excellency. Religion is

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the bond of love, the intimate tie of union between the creator and his creatures, and between all thinking, ſenſible and rational creatures with each other, the principle of the cloſeſt connection of the natural with the moral world, and the preſent with the future. And this love, this connection, this union, produces, in every human heart it animates, new ſpiritual life, freſh inclination and ability to all good; more ſpiritual vigour, more inclination and ability to duty and to virtue, than any other conſideration, any other relation of things could do. And ſurely, my dear friends, when I know and venerate a God, who is my creator, my preſerver, my benefactor, my father, my ſovereign and my judge, and who has given me laws and annexed the moſt glorious rewards to the obſervance of them, the ſevereſt puniſhments to the violation of them; what vaſt authority muſt theſe laws have over me! How ſacred, how inviolable, muſt they be to me! And if I perceive this God, this father, on all ſides in his works; on all ſides hear his inſtructing, his encouraging, his warning voice; feel myſelf on all ſides encompaſſed by him and the effects of his wiſdom and goodneſs; revere him, wherever I am, in the thickeſt darkneſs no leſs than in the brighteſt day, as the witneſs of my thoughts and actions: how ſhall I dare to think or to do anything that militates with his will, or neglect anything that he has enjoined me? How can I be deficient in courage

and ability, in his preſence and under his inſpection, to do, and readily to do, what is right and fit and in every caſe the beſt? And if I love this God, this father, as religion teaches me, with filial affection, think on him and raiſe myſelf to him with cordial ſatisfaction, rejoice in his exiſtence, in his preſence, in his benefits, in his diſpoſitions towards me and his connections with me: how eaſy and agreeable will it be to me to keep his commandments, to promote his deſigns, and to work as it were in fellowſhip with him for advancing the univerſal perfection and felicity of his kingdom!

But as religion connects the creatures with the creator, ſo likewiſe does it connect the creatures with each other; ſo does it unite me alſo with all my fellow-creatures; it informs me that they are all children of my heavenly father, that we all compoſe but one large family, whoſe father is God, and whoſe firſt-born brother is his ſon Jeſus. And if I believe this, if I have a conſcious ſenſe of this, I then live among my own brothers and ſiſters, who have the ſame origin and the ſame deſtination with myſelf: and then how muſt the ſight of every man, how muſt the previous diſpoſitions, the capacities, the abilities of every man, the pleaſures, the proſperity, the merits of every man, delight me! And, if I am animated with that brotherly love towards them which religion alone can inſpire, how impoſſible will it be for me to deprive them

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of their property and privileges, or to diſunite and injure them by any means whatever! How far from my heart will all pride, all coldneſs, all envy, all hatred be! How compaſſionate ſhall I be towards them, merciful as my father in heaven is merciful, beneficent as he is beneficent! And what duty towards my neighbour ſhall I then neglect? Which of them ſhall I diſcharge without fidelity and pleaſure?

And if I now feel the whole weight of the love of God and of Chriſt towards man, which the chriſtian doctrine repreſents to us in ſo affecting a manner; if I have an inward ſentiment of what great things God has done for me, how much his ſon Jeſus has ſacrificed and ſuffered for me: if I take the temper and the life of this my deliverer for the rule of my conduct; if I look up to him as my fore-runner and chief, and firmly confide in his promiſes; if I ſeriouſly conſider the intimate connection of the preſent with the future, and regard one as the preliminary to the other, one as the time of ſowing and the other as the time of reaping; what incitement, what ability to everything that is right and proper, that is great and generous, muſt all this afford me! No, if religion make me not better, if it make me not a very good and virtuous man, I muſt be incorrigible, muſt have abdicated the dignity of reaſon, muſt have a completely inſenſible and thoroughly depraved heart! And what a value muſt this likewiſe give to religion in

our eſteem, if we do but in any degree apprehend the worth of moral goodneſs and virtue!

He that is wiſe and good, my pious hearers, may alſo be contented and cheerful; and the religion that procures us thoſe advantages, procures us likewiſe theſe. Far from inſpiring her true profeſſors with ſervile fear and gloomy terrors, ſhe fills them with reſolution and courage. Far from being a diſturber of joy, ſhe unlocks to us the richeſt ſources of it, and invites us to enjoy them. Yes, if I follow her precepts and believe in her promiſes: tranquillity and joy inhabit my breaſt; then am I aſſured of my pardon, the forgiveneſs of my ſins, the good pleaſure of my creator and ſovereign; then my heart no more torments and condemns me; then I enjoy the bleſſedneſs of a good conſcience. Yes, if I allow myſelf to be guided and conducted by her, and conſider all things in the light which ſhe diffuſes over them: then am I ſatisfied with all things; ſatisfied with God, whom I know and revere as the wiſeſt and tendereſt father, and from whom I expect only good and conſtantly the beſt; ſatisfied with all his conſtitutions and diſpoſals in the natural and the moral world; ſatisfied with the ſituation and the circumſtances wherein he has placed me, with the portion of abilities and goods he has allotted me, with the events he has ſuſpended over me, knowing as I do that all this is adapted to my appointment and to my happineſs; ſatisfied with myſelf, conſcious as I

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am of my uprightneſs and integrity, and if I even err, yet do not wilfully tranſgreſs, and am making nearer approaches to the mark of chriſtian perfection; ſatisfied with all my fellow-creatures, as I hate none, envy none, as I love them all, rejoice with all the good, and am patient and indulgent to the frail and infirm; ſatisfied with all things about me, as everything is, and is juſt ſo, as the All-wiſe and Allgracious would have it to be!

Nay, if I allow myſelf to be guided by the light of religion and to be animated by her ſpirit, I find ſources of joy opening to me on all ſides, as pure as they are inexhauſtible; then I poſſeſs more real joy than the greateſt minion of fortune can have, who knows not this giver of joy; then I rejoice in God, my benefactor and father; rejoice in his ſon Jeſus, my redeemer and lord; rejoice in my capacities and endowments and my high deſtination; rejoice in all the beautiful and good that is and happens in the world; rejoice in all mankind as my brethren, as the children of my heavenly father, as the partakers in my future felicity; rejoice in every animate and inanimate creature, as the creatures of my God; rejoice in viſible and inviſible things, the preſent and the future; and rejoice that I am immortal, and may aſſuredly expect an everlaſting life, a never-ending felicity. And for this cheerful confidence, this ſatisfaction, theſe manifold joys, I am indebted to religion. How can

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I fail of perceiving its worth; how can I miſtake its excellency?

Yes, ſhe it is, this divine religion, which conducts, ſtrengthens, comforts and exhilarates me, in all the viciſſitudes of my ſituation, in whatever I do, and in whatever befalls me, in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death. She gives quite another appearance to all things; ſweetens every pleaſure to me, and augments every good; mitigates every trouble and alleviates every ſorrow; and never leaves me deſtitute of inſtruction, of ſupport, of conſolation and aſſiſtance. If I enjoy ſatisfaction and pleaſure, ſhe exalts the enjoyment by inſpiring me with the cheerful ſentiment that it is God who grants me this ſatisfaction and procures me this pleaſure. Have I various and important duties to fulfil, laborious affairs to tranſact, ſhe alleviates and dignifies them, by repreſenting them to me as commiſſions from God, by aſſuring me that I am labouring in his ſervice, that I am diſcharging my truſt under his inſpection and with his approbation. Does an opportunity occur to me of doing good, of being uſeful and of promoting the happineſs of my ſpecies, ſhe cauſes me to feel the whole weight of the honour of being an inſtrument in the hand of God, whereby he executes his deſigns, and diſſeminates life and bleſſing amongſt the human race. Do I meet with croſſes and diſappointments on my way, do I fall into danger and diſtreſs;

diſtreſs; ſhe bids me lift my eyes and my heart to heaven and implore and expect ſuccour from him who does what he will both in heaven and on earth, and never wills anything but what is right and fit. Am I oppreſſed by any burden of life; ſhe bids me depend upon the ſuccour of him who laid this load upon me, and to be aſſured that he will not impoſe more on me than I am able to bear. Does any misfortune overtake me; I then adore in ſilent reverence, as inſtructed by religion, the hand of him who inflicts it upon me, who inflicts it upon me for wiſe and good purpoſes, and without whoſe permiſſion no harm can happen unto me. Do afflictions befall me, which I have not deſerved, I accept them as the diſpenſations of my God and father, with filial ſubmiſſion; revere them as the means of nurture and exerciſe, by which he would lead me to higher perfection; and I know that, ſooner or later, all will turn to my good. Am I alarmed and perplexed at any extraordinary or terrifying events that happen in the world and among mankind; then, full of faith, I look up to him who governs all things, directing them by the laws of unerring wiſdom, and tranquillize my ſpirit by the conſideration that he will certainly at length finiſh all things well. Do my honeſt undertakings, my good and beneficent endeavours, fail of ſucceſs; I then make an offering of my will to the far wiſer and far better will of my God and father; ſatisfy myſelf with the conſciouſneſs

ſcioufneſs of having acted uprightly and well-pleaſing to him; and therefore reckon not my pains and labour for loſt, becauſe I know that in his kingdom and under his adminiſtration, nothing good can poſſibly be loſt. Do the infirmities of age oppreſs me, attenuate my faculties, and weigh down my body to the earth; I reſign myſelf to that God, who in my infancy, in my childhood, in my youth, in my manhood, has never forſaken me, who has been conſtantly my provider and my father, and will be ſo for ever. Does death draw nigh me, bid me ſet my houſe in order and prepare to quit all viſible and earthly things; I then hear the voice of my heavenly father calling me to himſelf, calling me from the preſent into another and a ſuperior life, calling me home from my pilgrimage. Conducted and ſupported by religion, I cheerfully follow this call to the land unknown, enter with confidence the dark and ſilent path of death, paſs along it undiſmayed, certain as I am that it terminates in the pureſt light, in undecaying felicity to me.

Thus am I taught, thus led, thus cheered, thus ſupported and ſtrengthened, thus comforted by religion, in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death! Thus does ſhe preſerve her value in all times, in all places, in all circumſtances, in regard to all my affairs, all my concerns and fortunes, invariably continuing what ſhe is; conſtantly the ſafeſt teacher, the moſt faithful guide, the beſt comforter

comforter of man! Yes, o divine religion, that art thou, that wilt thou ever be to me, as thou haſt hitherto been! Ever my trueſt friend, my inſeparable companion along the path of life, the partaker of all my joys and ſorrows, my conſolation in death, and my guide to the manſions of bliſs? Yes, o my maker, to know thee the only true God, the Allwiſe, the Allbountiful, the father of mankind, to know thee, and him whom thou haſt ſent, our ſaviour Jeſus, this is life eternal, the ſupreme, everlaſting bliſs!

SERMON XVII.

The Value of the Chriſtian Religion in particular.

GOD, every living, intelligent being pants after thee. Of thee, all who have the happineſs to know thee ſeek light and ſolace and force and hope and felicity. And none of them pant after thee in vain. Thou reviveſt and rejoiceſt them all, and conducteſt them all to their ſuperior deſtination. None ſeek of thee what they may not in full meaſure find with thee, and thou willingly letteſt thyſelf be found of them that diligently ſeek thee. Thou even preventeſt thy children with paternal benignity, inviteſt them to thee, offereſt them all thy gifts and goods, and inviteſt them to the cheerful enjoyment of them. As various and urgent as their wants, ſo rich and inexhauſtible are the ſources of help and refreſhment thou openeſt to them. Father of compaſſions, what bleſſed experiences have we, thy human offspring, had of thy preventing grace and goodneſs! Who of us, how few of all the children of Adam ſought thee,

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ſought aſſiſtance of thee, while diſconſolate under the ſtrongeſt ſentiment of want and miſery, and thou ſenteſt to them thy ſon from heaven to ſupply thoſe wants and to remove that miſery? And how glorioufly haſt thou holpen us through him! What light, what comfort, what life, what hope, what felicity has he brought from heaven to the earth! What happy alterations in our preſent ſtate, and what exhilarating proſpects in futurity are we beholden to him for! By him thou haſt converted our penury into wealth, our miſery into happineſs, our ſorrow into joy, our wants into incitement and means to a bleſſed enjoyment. By him and through him we find all things, that we could no where elſe have found. Oh praiſed, for ever praiſed be thy goodneſs, moſt merciful father, who haſt afforded us this help; by ſending this deliverer and ſaviour, this comforter and giver of joy, and opening to us theſe well-ſprings of life and happineſs through him! And praiſed, for ever praiſed be thou, who didſt come in the name of the Lord, diſpelling the darkneſs of miſery and deſolation before thee, and ſhedding light and joy and bleſſing on the human race and alſo upon us! Bleſſed be to us the memorial of thy advent, and of the great work thou haſt finiſhed upon earth! Yes, in thee and through thee are we bleſſed; and therefore we magnify thee and the Father, who gave thee to be a ſaviour to us, with united and grateful hearts. O God, teach us thyſelf to apprehend the whole worth of thy

thy bounty and our happineſs, and worthily to uſe them. Let the miſery we bring upon ourſelves be ever diminiſhing among us, and true chriſtian happineſs be ever increaſing. Accompany in this view the diſcourſe of thy ſervant with energy and bleſſing, open to it every avenue of our hearts, and cauſe it there to make deep and laſting impreſſion. Bend thy propitious ear to theſe our petitions which we offer up unto thee, in the name and words of thy beloved ſon, our lord: Our father, &c.

JOHN X. 10.

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

THE arrival of a perſon who promiſes life, and more abundant life, that is, complete felicity to them to whom he comes, and is able to fulfill his promiſe, muſt be moſt deſirable to ſuch as have vehement aſpirations after happineſs, and at the ſame time are oppreſſed with the inward ſenſe of their deſtitution of it! And who of us, my dear friends, can miſtake this wiſhed-for perſon, who the happy people to whom he brought theſe joyful tidings? How eager are all men after happineſs; and how little true felicity, how much actual miſery, was there among mortals when Jeſus made his appearance in the world, and offered them deliverance from miſery and the poſſeſſion of that happineſs

pineſs they had ſo long been looking for in vain! And with how great right could he make them this offer! Knew he not all the ſources of their happineſs? Opened he not all of them to the human race! Where is there one that ever yet drew from thoſe ſources, and was deceived in his expectations? And how many thouſands and thouſands again have actually drawn therefrom, and quenched their thirſt for happineſs!

To us, my dear friends, theſe ſources ſtand open alſo; and we are invited to them by the Saviour who came into the world to impart life and more abundance of it. Let us then approach theſe wells of ſalvation, ſtudy to know more of theſe bleſſings, compare them with our wants and defects; and then try whether we may not become happy likewiſe, or whether we may not augment and improve our happineſs.

What are then the principal wants of mankind? And how can and will Jeſus ſupply them, and thereby render them happy? To anſwer theſe queſtions, my pious hearers, will be the ſubject and ſcope of my preſent diſcourſe.

Light for the underſtanding; reſt for the heart; courage and ability to goodneſs; comfort in diſtreſſes; hope for the future: theſe are the principal wants of man. Whoever ſupplies theſe, delivers him from the burden of his miſery, opens to him the richeſt ſources of felicity, and makes him truly happy. And this the Saviour of mankind who

came into the world, both can and will perform. He can and will in all theſe reſpects give them life and more abundantly.

Light for the underſtanding, is the firſt and moſt urgent want of the thinking man. To act with conſciouſneſs and conſideration; to reflect upon what he ſees, what he hears, what he feels, what befalls him; to inquire into the cauſes and ſcope of things; to look back upon the paſt, to pry into futurity, and to compare them both with the preſent: is the natural employment, the moſt eſſential privilege of man; it is this which conſtitutes him man. To inquire after truth and to diſcover the truth, is the life and the nutriment of his ſpirit. But how long can he employ himſelf in ſuch reflections, without entangling himſelf in a labyrinth, whoſe outlet he can never find? How far can he proceed in the inveſtigation and the knowledge of truth, ere he ruſhes upon ſome precipice, which makes him recoil with affright! How ſoon will he be deceived by error and the fooliſh prepoſſeſſions of fancy, or tormented by doubt and uncertainty, if he have no faithful conductor through the mazes of human thought!

What am I, and what is all that ſurrounds me? Whence am I, and whence has all this originated? To what end am I, to what end is all this ordained? What is to become of me, what is to become of all this? Does intelligence preſide or caſualty, wiſdom or blind chance, in the concatenation of things,

in the occurrences of the world, in the deſtinies of mankind? Are wiſdom, virtue, happineſs real, attainable things, or only empty names? Which is the way that leads to the knowledge of truth, to the poſſeſſion of virtue, to the enjoyment of happineſs? Is there a God? Is there a Providence? In what relation ſtands this God to the world and to me? How far does this Providence extend over the world and over me? What have I in theſe reſpects, to hope for or to fear?—What queſtions my dear friends! How difficult to be anſwered by the man that is left to himſelf! What error is too groſs for him to plunge into in inquiries like theſe! And yet how important is their deciſion! What a torment muſt all rational reflection be to him, while they cannot be decided in a ſatisfactory manner! Yes, here man feels the want of ſome ſafe guide, ſome ſuperior light. Here he longs for this conductor, for this light, as a pilgrim overtaken by the night in ſome lone and trackleſs wild, longs for the dawn of day, or the appearance of ſome faithful guide.

Chriſtians, this day has dawned upon us! God has ſent to us from heaven this faithful guide! Jeſus calls to us in our forlorn eſtate: "I am the way, the truth and the life; I am the light of the world; he that followeth me walketh not in darkneſs." No, his divine doctrine has diſperſed the darkneſs of error and of doubt, of ignorance and of ſuperſtition, with which the wiſe and the unwiſe, the learned and

the unlearned, were heretofore oppreſſed. It has brought concealed and miſtaken truth to light, and what was but little, and that little only doubtfully known, it has promulgated to all, and placed beyond all doubt. It has brought us to the knowledge of God, the true, the only God, and thereby given ſtability and aſſurance to the human mind. By it enlightened, we know our origin and the origin of all things, our deſtination and that of all living and ſenſitive beings. By it inſtructed, we know that there is a God, a ſupremely perfect ſpirit, an infinitely wiſe and bountiful father of the world and of mankind, and that we are his creatures, his children; that we and all things ſubſiſt under his inſpection and providential care; that all is diſpoſed, conducted, governed, and all directed to the beſt and worthieſt purpoſes by him. — And now caſualty and chance and blind neceſſity with all their terrors vaniſh from before our eyes. Now no intricacies bewilder us, we are no longer perplexed by any apparent diſorders and inconſiſtencies in the combination of things, in the complication of human deſtinies. Now light, order, beauty, perfection, are diſplayed in all things; for all are effects and arrangements of ſupreme benignity and wiſdom. The entrance to the ſanctuary of truth, the moſt important, moſt comfortable truth, ſtands open to us; the way of virtue is made plain and luminous, and leads us ſtraight to the manſions of bliſs, where we are invited to the enjoyment of their treaſures.

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We have now a ſafe clue to guide us through the labyrinth of afflictions, by means of which we can avoid every ſnare and precipice, avail ourſelves of every ray of light that appears to us, and proceed to meet an ever brighter day. —— Yes, look unto Jeſus for the ſupply of your wants, all you who thirſt after the knowledge of truth. Apprehend his doctrine, adhere firmly to it, ſtudy it in the writings which his meſſengers have left us, improve your knowledge in it from day to day, truſt to its declarations with ever increaſing confidence; it cannot, it will not lead you wrong: it will conduct you to progreſſively higher wiſdom, and you will find complete ſatisfaction in it.

Tranquillity for the heart; tranquillity under the ſenſe of our weakneſs; tranquillity amidſt the violence and impetuoſity of our appetites; tranquillity under the conſciouſneſs of our tranſgreſſions and ſins; tranquillity in the view of the apparently perplexed courſe of things and of human miſery; tranquillity amidſt the great inconſtancy and caducity of all that is ſenſible and earthly: what requiſites, what urgent requiſites are theſe my dear friends! Who will ſupply them? Where ſhall man ſeek and find this tranquillity? In what ſchool of philoſophy, in what temple of mirth, in what ſilent and ſolitary deſert, or in what brilliant abode of pleaſure and magnificence, in what rank, in which of the claſſes of mankind, ſhall he ſearch after it and find it? Ah how earneſtly do both the wiſe and

the ignorant, both the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the recluſe and the voluptuary, ramble in queſt of this tranquillity! With what eagerneſs of expectation do they now ſtrike into this path and then into that; and, ſoured by repeated diſappointments, ſooner or later return by the way that they went, ſighing and aſhamed of their credulity and folly, and joining at laſt in that doleful complaint, All, all is vanity, is empty, is vexation of ſpirit!

But why, o infatuated race, why do you ſeek reſt where it is not to be found? Oh come to him, ſeek it of him, who has promiſed to give you likewiſe in this reſpect life and more abundance of it; to Jeſus who has reſtored to the earth that reſt which mankind had miſunderſtood, and as it were baniſhed from their hearts and their dwellings! Hear what he announces on the part of God to ſuch as in ſincerity ſeek reſt of him, and how he ſupplies every want of the heart.

O thou (it is thus that he addreſſes mankind) who art ſenſible of thy infirmities, let not that ſentiment weigh thee down. God, thy ſovereign, thy father, requires nothing of thee that thou art not able to afford. Never will he lay burdens on thee that are too heavy for thee to bear. Only exert thy faculties, they will grow ſtronger by exerciſe. He who has, and faithfully employs what he has, will be ever receiving more. Thou haſt the Almighty for thy ſupport; and his ſtrength is mighty, above all

expectation,

expectation, even in the feeble that look up to him and rely upon him. Here thou art ſtill a child; hereafter, if thou only retain the ſimplicity of a child, thou wilt arrive at manhood, and perform manly actions, ſuch actions as I have performed.

Doſt thou feel appetites within thee, which none of all the things that ſurround thee are able to appeaſe or to ſatiate; oh learn from thence, that thou art not made for this world alone; that greater capacities and nobler faculties, than belong to the courſe of this terreſtrial life, lie hid within thee. Direct thy aſpirations to God and to futurity; let the love of truth, of virtue, of God, of man, pervade and poſſeſs thy heart. Theſe are goods and felicities that are worthy of thy moſt ſtrenuous efforts, that will employ all thy faculties and powers, that leave neither diſguſt nor languor, nor wearifome exhauſtion and ſurfeit behind them. At the ſame time manfully maintain the warfare againſt the appetites and the paſſions. The prize that awaits thee is worth the conflict. He that here contends and conquers with me, ſhall reign hereafter with me: he that loſes his life, or anything elſe for my ſake, ſhall find it again.

Does the conſciouſneſs of thy paſt ſins and failings diſturb thee, doſt thou dread the diſpleaſure and the puniſhment of the judge of the world: accept the glad tidings which he commiſſioned me to proclaim to ſinful man. Accept them, and rejoice that God, thy ſovereign and thy judge, is alſo thy

father; that he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger and of great goodneſs; that he forgives the repentant and returning ſinner all his ſins, remits his puniſhment, reſtores him to his once ſlighted favour, and will grant him grace for juſtice. To aſſure thee thereof he ſent me upon the earth. Sin is cancelled through me, iniquity is pardoned, tranſgreſſions are blotted out, guilt is done away; peace between God and man is reſtored by me. Only beware of the deceitfulneſs of ſin; reſcue thyſelf more and more from its ſhameful dominion; maintain thy recovered freedom; redouble thy zeal in goodneſs: ſignalize thyſelf by gratitude and love to thy gracious benefactor and patron, and be faithful unto the end; and then ſhall thy former tranſgreſſions be remembered no more, and their ruinous conſequences ſhall be obviated for ever.

Art thou apt at times to be ſtaggered at the ſight of ſo ſeemingly perplexed a ſcene of things as the preſent ſtate affords, and the diverſity of miſery that prevails among mankind: conſole thyſelf in the conſideration of the parental providence and love of thy heavenly father, whoſe thoughts and ways are as far above thy thoughts and ways as the heavens are above the earth. Leave it to him how the world and mankind ſhould be governed, and the ends of his creation anſwered: and be aſſured that his purpoſes will not fail, and that his ultimate end is nothing but perfection and happineſs. Judge not by that ſpan of ſpace, by that moment of time, thou

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art now enabled to ſurvey: extend thy comprehenſion to the whole, let thy mind expatiate in eternity; and doubt not but all will be ſooner or later unraveled, conformably to the laws of conſummate wiſdom and goodneſs. He, the Supremely-wiſe, the Supremely-good, comprehends the whole, he can produce light out of darkneſs, and turn every evil into a ſource of joy.

Does in ſhort the great uncertainty and inſtability of all earthly and ſenſible things alarm thee, diſturb the repoſe of thy mind; oh learn to eſteem thoſe things as what they really are; and while thou ſeeſt that the world, with its pleaſures, is paſſing away, never forget that he who doth the will of God abideth for ever. Never forget that thy ſpirit is immortal, and that an unchangeable, undecaying, and incorruptible inheritance is allotted thee in heaven. Soar above this tranſient ſcene of vanity, this crumbling world, and conſider thyſelf as a denizen of the future city of God, which has firm foundations, and which is thy true, thy permanent country. Thus, my dear friends, does Jeſus inſpire with reſt and ſatisfaction the man who ſeeks them of him; thus does he ſupply all the wants of our heart; thus does he give us likewiſe in this reſpect life and greater abundance of it.

Courage and ability in goodneſs is a third and no leſs urgent want of the thinking man. Unleſs this be ſupplied, how can he be contented and happy? He is ſenſible of powers, various active powers, within

within him. But how employ and to what end ſhall he apply them? What ſhall he hope to execute with them? Can he, or will he, ſurmount his weakneſs, conquer his dependance on ſenſible things and get the better of himſelf? Is not virtue too exalted for the reach of his faculties? Is ſhe not probably deſigned for beings of a ſuperior order to man? Is ſhe not rather a daughter of heaven than the offſpring of earth? As many powers as he feels himſelf to poſſeſs, ſo many obſtacles and difficulties does he meet with in his endeavours to exert them. Reſpectable and venerable are the dictates of reaſon; yet importunate and alluring are the requiſitions of ſenſe. For every incitement he perceives on one hand to good, he ſees a temptation and inducement on the other to evil. Who can proceed in ſo ſlippery a path with firm and vigorous ſteps? Who can live confident and ſecure amidſt enemies and dangers? Who can preſume to reſiſt the impetuoſity of a torrent?

The chriſtian dares and is able to do it, my dear friends. In this reſpect alſo Jeſus gives him life and more abundantly. With him new ſpiritual life is come from heaven to earth. Feeble, torpid, dead, as the moral world appeared to be before his birth, it acquired a freſh activity, a nobler life, by his doctrine, by the moving of his ſpirit within it. Deſerted and waſte as the way of virtue had antecedently been, becauſe thorns and briars choaked up its unfrequented paths, or concealed them with imper-

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vious ſhade: many a traveller now walks them with ſatisfaction and delight; Jeſus has cleared them for his followers, made the crooked ſtrait and the rough places plain. He became a light to our feet and a lantern to our paths. — Follow then, o thou that panteſt after liberty and virtue, who wiſheſt to aſcend above ſenſible objects, and to become thoroughly wiſe and good; only follow the direction of Jeſus, follow his example, tread in his footſteps, become and be a chriſtian with all thy heart. This will inſpire thee with freſh powers, and animate thee with renovated life. Thou wilt learn to feel the dignity of the man, the dignity of the chriſtian; and this apprehenſion will never allow thee to be deficient in courage and ability to good. Thou wilt learn to love God, and to love mankind: and this love will make all things eaſy to thee, every duty a delight. Chriſt will live and govern in thee; his mind, his ſpirit will direct thee, and through him thou canſt do all things. His ſhining example will be ever before thine eyes, conſtantly alluring thee to imitation, and warning thee of every devious and oblique way; and while thou ſeeſt the traces of his ſteps before thee, thou wilt purſue thy courſe in confidence and ſafety. The aſſurance of his ſupport, the conſciouſneſs of his approbation, the generous ambition of progreſſively gaining a nearer and brighter aſſimilation with him, and thereby becoming capable of always greater felicity, will never allow thee to be weary or faint in following him.

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His promiſes will ſtrengthen thee, the victor's crown which he holds out to thee at the end of thy courſe, will ſhine upon thee in all its radiance, and the glorious proſpects he opens to thee in futurity, will encourage thee to ſubdue every difficulty, firmly to brave the hardeſt conflicts, to be more than conqueror and to perſevere unto the end. Yes, the faith of the chriſtian overcomes the world; vanquiſhes all oppoſition; is an inexhauſtible ſource of ſpiritual life and energy. As certainly as thou alloweſt thyſelf to be thoroughly animated by the ſpirit of chriſtianity and to be guided by its precepts, ſo certainly wilt thou be thoroughly free, thoroughly virtuous, and become as perfect as man can be.

Comfort in afflictions; who, my dear friends, who can deny this a place among the wants of mankind? Who has not often felt how great, how preſſing it is? For who has not often ſuffered, and earneſtly looked around him for conſolation and refreſhment? Without ſuffering no man has ever yet completed his earthly career. To be frail and mortal, and to live among merely frail and mortal creatures and things, and to remain free from all ſufferings, is a contradiction in terms. The very enjoyments of this life are for the moſt part ſo interwoven with ſufferings, that they cannot be purely poſſeſſed. And how infinitely diverſified are they! Inward and outward ſufferings; ſufferings of the mind; ſufferings of the body; ſufferings of affection; ſufferings of friendſhip; ſufferings of virtue.

And

And how rapidly they ſucceed each other! How often do they increaſe in numbers and in bitterneſs! And what can alleviate the burden of them to me? What can teach me to bear them with compoſure and fortitude? What can give me comfort and confidence when I ſuffer want; when I labour under pain; when ſo many attacks are made upon my welfare and my pleaſures; when oppreſſed by cares and troubles; when in conflict with ſuch obſtacles and diſappointments; when I fail in my beſt deſigns and cannot enjoy the fruit of my virtue; when my friends forſake me, my powers decay and the infirmities of age bear hard upon me? Can I expect aſſiſtance from mankind, who are as feeble as myſelf? Can riches, or honours, or diſſipations, or a ſplendid luxurious life, aſſuage my pains and heal my wounds? Or can I be relieved by the ſight of ſuch numbers of the unhappy, who ſuffer as much as myſelf, or even more?

No, my chriſtian brother, this is what Jeſus, the comforter from heaven, alone can do; he, who himſelf endured ſo much, was made perfect through ſufferings, and by ſufferings entered into his glory. He knows the afflictions of human nature, he has undergone them himſelf, has thus dignified them, and given them a different aſpect. He can, he will conſole thee; will in this reſpect likewiſe give thee life and more abundantly. Accept his offered comfort, and let him revive thy wounded heart, reſtore thy ſoul. Even ſufferings, he ſays to thee, come

from

from God; are ordinances and diſpenſations of thy father in heaven; and whatever he, the Allwiſe, the Allbountiful ordains, what he, thy father, decrees for thee, is good, and muſt infallibly advance thy intereſt. Willingly would he ſpare thee and all his children upon earth, from ſorrows, had he not in view to diſcipline and correct and train thee and them to a ſuperior life. Willingly would he grant you pure delights, and let all things go according to your wiſh, if you were already capable of bearing ſuch ſucceſs. He chaſtens, he proves, he exerciſes you, becauſe he loves you, and becauſe his love embraces all your deſtinies and provides for your future welfare as well as for the preſent. The path of ſorrow is indeed a dark and rugged way; but it leads to perfection and happineſs ſuch as firmly and uprightly purſue it. Even ſufferings are benefits, when God inflicts them on his children, to teach them obedience, fortitude and faith. Even ſufferings, to ſuch as patiently endure and wiſely uſe them, ſooner or later become a ſource of bleſſing. What they now ſow in tears, they ſhall hereafter reap in joy. "The ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall hereafter be revealed in us." No, bear, endure, ſuffer without repining, with filial reſignation, what thy father in heaven calls thee to bear, to endure and to ſuffer. He knows thy wants and thy powers, and every burden he lays upon thee is proportionate to them. He knows to what he has appointed

pointed thee in his kingdom, and at preſent intends to prepare and fit thee for it. Look unto me, ſays Jeſus to his confeſſors, look unto me, thy leader and chief. Bear and ſuffer, as I have borne and ſuffered; fight the conflicts which I have fought and in which ſo many of my followers have ſucceſsfully ſtriven. The end of thy way will be pure, exalted felicity, the prize of thy victory will be permanent glory and honour. And what, my dear friends, can inſpire us with comfort in ſorrows, if ſuch promiſes and ſuch proſpects are unable to do it?

Hope, a ſure and certain hope for the future, is another want of man, which it is uncommonly neceſſary for him to ſupply. The more tranſitory the preſent, the ſhorter and more uncertain its duration: the more ſteadily ſhould he direct his eyes and his deſires to futurity, the leſs indifferent can he be concerning what he has there to hope for or to fear. That, ſooner or later, to-day or to-morrow, all outward viſible things will vaniſh away to him, and be immerſed in the profoundeſt obſcurity of night; that, ſooner or later, to-day or to-morrow, his riches, his diſtinctions, his honours, his power, his beauty, his health, his life, all that he is and poſſeſſes as an inhabitant of this world, muſt be loſt to him; that ſooner or later, to-day or to-morrow, a dark and lonely grave will incloſe his body, and diſſolve it into duſt; that ſooner or later, to-day or to-morrow he will quit this world, with all its glories and all its joys, and paſs into a quite

quite different, to him an unknown ſtate: this he knows, this he feels; this every pain declares, every infirmity, every ſickneſs, the departure of every acquaintance and friend, every ſtroke of the paſſing-bell, every open grave, every tomb, every church-yard hillock, in accents that cannot be miſtaken. And where is the man whom this does not affect, does not plunge into deep reflection, does not frequently ſhake with conſternation and doubt!

Is then this night to laſt for ever? Are all theſe beauties and ſatisfactions to vaniſh from my eyes for ever? Am I to loſe them all entirely and for ever, and to be made amends for my loſs by nothing? Am I then entirely duſt? Is this viſionary life my whole exiſtence? Do I totally ceaſe to be, when my body ceaſes to move, and the blood to flow in my veins? But what becomes of the mind? Does it too ceaſe to exiſt? Is the beam of heaven for ever extinguiſhed? Is the celeſtial fire which glowed in the heart for ever quenched? And if that which now thinks and acts within me ſurvive the diſſolution of my body, what will be my portion then? Into what region of the immenſity of ſpace ſhall I be tranſported? Who will be there my conductor? What joys, or what ſufferings, what retributions await me there? How is the preſent connected with the future? Ah, who can diſpel this darkneſs from before my eyes; who will ſolve theſe doubts? Who will give me that light and certainty, without which I cannot here be ſatisfied?

This

This alſo, my chriſtian brother, this alſo can Jeſus do, and will; he who promiſes to give thee life, and more abundantly. Even this thy want he powerfully ſupplies, the conqueror of death and the grave, the reſtorer of life and felicity. Authentically to certify thee of this, God ſent him from heaven to the earth, to die upon the croſs and to riſe again from the dead. "I, ſays he, I am the reſurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, ſhall not die eternally;" he ſhall paſs through the gate and grave of death to a better life. No, this life is not the whole of thy appointment; it is only the firſt, the loweſt ſtep of thy exiſtence. No, thou art not wholly duſt; thy ſpirit is of divine extraction, it is immortal, will riſe above the duſt, and need not dread corruption. No, the night that ſurrounds thee in death, will not eternally, will not long endure; the morn will come, and the glorious day ariſe. No, the loſs thou ſuffereſt then is not irreparable, the friends thou then wilt loſe are not for ever loſt; infinitely more joys and felicities await thee in the future world, than thou couldſt enjoy in the preſent. Therefore ſhudder not thou at the preſence of death, tremble not thou at the grave, be not thou diſmayed at the darkneſs and gloom of the valley of the ſhadow of death, nor at what will be the portion of thy heritage for ever. Be faithful to God and to thy duty; think and live conſtantly as behoves a chriſtian: and then will thy death be a paſſage into a better, a ſuperior life;

then wilt thou, with confidence, ſee before thee the reſurrection of the dead; then wilt thou enter the abode where thy chief, thy lord, thy redeemer is, and take part in his glory; and he, who now is thy precurſor and guide, will alſo be thy leader through the valley of death, thy guide for eternity. There wilt thou reap the fruit of every good thought and action, and a conſtantly increaſing perfection and happineſs will be the reward of thy fidelity. What hopes, what proſpects, my dear friends! Animated by them how confidently may we meet futurity! How calm and reſigned behold all that is viſible and earthly, changing, revolving, ſinking hence, vaniſhing away!

Thus, chriſtians, are all our wants ſupplied by Jeſus. Thus do we find light to our underſtanding, reſt for our heart, courage and ability to good, comfort in ſorrow, hope in futurity; thus do we find life and more abundantly with him. Thus does he free us from every kind of miſery, and lead us to the higheſt felicity whereof we are capable. Oh let us then rejoice in him and his advent into the world and his great work on earth; let us adhere firmly to him, and reſign ourſelves intirely to his guidance and direction! Pervaded with affection and gratitude, let us draw from the ſources of knowledge, of wiſdom, of virtue, which he has opened to us. They are no leſs pure than inexhauſtible. "He that drinketh of this water ſhall not thirſt for ever." He that draws from

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theſe ſources, will derive joy and felicity, both for the preſent and the future life. Oh may we all do ſo, and thus aſſuage our thirſt after truth and certainty, after peace of mind, perfection and felicity!

Advent-ſunday, 1781.

SERMON XVIII.

The Value of Chriſtianity, in a view to the General Advantages which it has procured to Mankind and ſtill procures.

GOD, our moſt loving and beneficent father, what a joyful ſalutary event calls us this day into thy preſence! Of what benefits, of what advantages, of what bleſſings and comforts of the preſent and of the future life does it not remind us! Yes, the commemoration of the nativity of Jeſus in the world, and his great work on earth, is the commemoration of our deliverance and our felicity; the commemoration of the happieſt revolution that ever took place in the ſtate of mankind in general, and alſo in ours! Yes, that light which firſt ſhone upon the world at the riſing of the ſun of righteouſneſs, illumines and gladdens even us! The comfort and the hope which this great benefactor by his doctrine diffuſed among mortals refreſh and reſtore even us! Even among us has virtue acquired numerous votaries by this its grand promoter! Yes,

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by him we enjoy as men and as chriſtians, innumerable advantages of which otherwiſe we ſhould be deſtitute, and of which we could not be deſtitute without being wretched! Now we know thee, our Creator and Father; we know thy gracious, thy compaſſionate diſpoſitions towards mankind; we know the way that leads to thee and to ſupreme felicity. Now we need not wander in the dark mazes of ſuperſtition or doubt, but may fulfil our deſtination on ſtrait and luminous paths. Now we are deficient neither in motive nor ability to good, and by good to attain to the perfection of which thou haſt made us capable. Now we have grounds enough for ſoothing ourſelves both in life and in death. Oh thrice happy we, that thou haſt ſo highly favoured us in thy ſon Jeſus, that thou haſt bleſſed us through him with ſuch various and ineſtimable benefits! Thanks, heartfelt eternal thanks be to thee, the Gracious, the Merciful, for this proof of thy condeſcenſion and love! How far does it exceed all our deſerts, all our expectations! How happy are we thereby become, and how much happier may we yet be! Ah let us never forget it; let none of us receive thy grace in vain! let us rather feel the whole worth of the benefits which thy goodneſs has conferred upon us; let us ſtudy to apprehend their magnitude, their intimate connection with our happineſs ever more and more by our own experience, and ſo conſtantly to uſe them, as is agreeable to thy will and our ſalvation. Bleſs to that end the

meditations we are now about to enter on concerning the things that relate to our peace, and let them fill us with holy gratitude and joy. All this we implore of thee in the name of thy ſon our ſaviour, and in full confidence as his devoted ſervants addreſs thee farther in his words: Our father, &c.

2 COR. V. 17.

Old things are paſt away; behold, all things are become new.

WE all rejoice, my pious hearers, in the advantages accruing to us from the appearance of Jeſus among men and his great work upon earth. Why otherwiſe are we wont to celebrate the feſtival of his birth; why hail this day more gladly than others? Our joy is undoubtedly very proper and becoming; it reſts upon the moſt ſolid foundations, on events ſuperlatively deſirable and joyful. But is our joy likewiſe rational? Do we know, do we rightly conſider what a bleſſed influence chriſtianity has had and ſtill has on our welfare, and in general on the welfare of mankind; and is this the reaſon that the memorial of the birth of Jeſus, the founder of chriſtianity, is ſo joyful to us? — I ſhall endeavour, my pious hearers, to advance this knowledge and promote theſe reflections in you by my preſent diſcourſe, and thus render more rational and lively the joy which the return of this feſtival excites.

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We are naturally furniſhed with an opportunity for it by the words of our text. "Old things are paſt away," ſays the apoſtle, "behold, all things are become new." Judaiſm, would he ſay, judaiſm with all its burdenſome ordinances and ceremonies, is ſuperſeded by the chriſtian doctrine; the wall of ſeparation between the jews and heathens is broken down; chriſtianity has produced a great and happy revolution in the ſentiments, in the manners, in the religion and worſhip, in the whole ſtate of mankind; it has contributed much to the advancement of their perfection and happineſs. Let us therefore from theſe words, conſider the common advantages that chriſtianity has procured to the human race in general, and ſtill procures; advantages which even they who deny or doubt of the divine origin of the chriſtian doctrines, muſt allow to be highly valuable and important.

We may reduce theſe advantages to four chief heads. The firſt concerns knowledge; the ſecond virtue; the third peace of mind; and the fourth, the outward welfare of mankind.

Firſt the culture of the human mind and the knowledge of truth in general, has been improved and more diffuſed by chriſtianity among mankind. As chriſtianity does not, like the old heathen religions, conſiſt in rites and ceremonies, in ſolemnities and ſacrifices, but in doctrines and moral precepts, ſo muſt it neceſſarily have awakened mankind by degrees to more reflection on inviſible, intel-

lectual moral objects, on their nature and deſtination, on their mutual relations and connections with each other, on what they are at preſent and what they are deſigned to be and to become hereafter; and theſe reflections muſt have gradually ſpread themſelves among all ranks and conditions of men, whereas till then they had been left entirely to the philoſophers as they were called. By this means the culture of the human mind in general has been very much promoted, and will in courſe of time be continually more ſo, as it will be more clearly ſeen how far chriſtianity is from infringing the rights of ſound reaſon, and how favourable it is on the contrary to the free inveſtigation of truth. By this means many precepts of wiſdom, many kinds of knowledge, which were formerly looked upon as the peculiar property of the philoſophers, are already incorporated into the general maſs of human knowledge; and thus by degrees, all that is generally uſeful and good of this kind, together with the peculiar doctrines of religion will be delivered and received into the common bank or treaſure of popular wiſdom and knowledge at all times ready for every one's uſe. Thus much however is certain, that, among none of the heathen nations, the Greeks and Romans not excepted, were there ſuch numbers of perſons of all ranks, who reflected ſo much on their moſt momentous concerns, on God and religion, on morality and virtue, on the true end of their being and their immortality, and by reflection

tion proceeded ſo far as among the chriſtians; and for this extraordinary phenomenon, I know of no other competent reaſon to be given, than chriſtianity itſelf. I will not deny, that conſidered as a predominant religion, at certain times it has been as great an impediment to reflection and liberal inquiry as heatheniſm; and that occaſionally it has conſiſted with regard to the generality of its profeſſors, in a blind implicit belief. But I ſpeak at preſent of the advantages we owe to chriſtianity, conſidered at large; and if it has not at all times and always in the ſame degree been productive of them by the fault of mankind, yet they now ſubſiſt, and it is undeniable that we are chiefly indebted to them for its ſalutary influence.

Let it not be ſaid that we are principally beholden to the writings of the ancient philoſophers of Greece and Rome, and the more general publication of them, for the cultivation of the human mind, and the progreſs human knowledge has made. If ye conſider the matter thoroughly, my pious hearers, you will find that even the benefits we have obtained from that quarter, and ſtill may obtain, are all owing to chriſtianity. I am not blind to the value of the writings of theſe ancient philoſophers: I am ſenſible to the beautiful, the true and the good that they contain. But what has preſerved theſe writings to us, and put them in our hands? Was it not chriſtianity that preſerved them for us, and as it were gave us them afreſh? How happened it that the languages

languages wherein theſe writings are compoſed, and which were no longer ſpoken anywhere, were ſtudied and kept up, but becauſe the worſhip of a numerous body of chriſtians was performed in them, and becauſe they were the languages of their ſacred books? Had it not been for this, would they not, like many other ancient languages which are only known to us by their names, have fallen into total oblivion, and with the treaſures of wiſdom they contain, have become a prey to all-devouring time?

But if chriſtianity has been favourable to the advancement of human knowledge in general, the knowledge of God and of religion in particular has been much more benefited by it. How widely is the important doctrine of the eternity of God diſſeminated among mankind by chriſtianity! Not only all chriſtians of every ſect and denomination, but even all mohammedans, who inhabit ſo conſiderable a part of the globe, and are probably ſtill more numerous than the chriſtians, are indebted for their belief of the one true God, that firſt principle of all true religion, to the chriſtian revelation. And how important is this doctrine! By it alone the world becomes to us a perfect whole, wherein all is moſt intimately connected together, and tends to one and the ſame ultimate end. By this doctrine alone man is taught to know the author of his exiſtence, the ſource of his felicity, the ſupreme object of his adoration, the foundation of his hopes. Enlightened by this doctrine, he no

longer conſiders himſelf as an orphan, a fatherleſs outcaſt, or as the effect of blind chance, or groaning under the authority of ſeveral powerful beings to him unknown, and at variance with each other. He knows from whom he ſprings, on whom he depends, under whoſe inſpection he is and will for ever be; and he has now a certain fixed point, in which all his thoughts, deſires, endeavours, deſigns and hopes tend to unite as in their proper centre.

How greatly too has the prevalence of idolatry been diminiſhed in the world by chriſtianity, and how many regions of it are freed from the tyrannical ſway of ſuperſtition, and from the iron ſceptre of crafty and mercenary prieſts! And what ſlaviſh notions, what tormenting uncertainty, what fears, what terrors, what childiſh notions, what empty hopes and frivolous joys, muſt debaſe and perplex mankind, wherever the abominations of idolatry prevail! Calamities and horrors, from which chriſtianity has delivered millions of human creatures, and ourſelves among them; and by their abolition has prepared the way for millions of mankind, and for us among them, to liberty, to peace of mind, to ſolid and liberal principles! That we are now no longer terrified at every unuſual appearance in nature; that we no longer perceive as it were at every ſtep we take, the harbingers and prognoſtics of imminent misfortune or approaching danger; that we are not continually obliged to be contriving

contriving new forms of ſacrifice and new modes of expiation; that we are no longer in dread of the caſual neglect or imperfect obſervance of numberleſs rites and ceremonies; that we do not take every adverſe event that befalls us for the vengeance of a wrathful deity; that we do not allow ourſelves implicitly to be led by others, but dare to follow our own perceptions and feelings: for all theſe privileges and bleſſings, my dear friends, we are indebted to the abolition of idolatry, and therefore to chriſtianity. Though many ſuperſtitions may ſtill prevail among chriſtians, and formerly many more may have prevailed than at preſent, yet we, and with us many thouſands of our brethren, are freed from them by the influence of chriſtianity, and in it lie the fruitful means for the total eradication of it from among its confeſſors; means which are continually coming forth into practice, and allow us to hope for ſtill more glorious effects.

And how very much is the knowledge of this only true God and his relations to us advanced and propagated among mankind by the doctrines of chriſtianity! All chriſtians, who are not completely ignorant, confeſs and revere God, not as a being who, infinitely exalted above them, ſtands in no kind of connection with them; but know and revere him as their creator and preſerver, as their father and benefactor, as the governour and judge of the world, as the obſerver and

rewarder

rewarder of human actions. And how prolific muſt this conception be among chriſtians, who reflect more attentively upon it! How muſt it lead to the ſolution of a thouſand things which were before inexplicable enigmas to them! They everywhere diſcover traces of the wiſdom, the power, the goodneſs of this God; they ſee him everywhere acting for the benefit of all living creatures and for their own; all things lead them back to him; and the thought of him ſpreads light and life and joy on all the face of nature.

Certainly the idea of what God is, of his attributes, and eſpecially of what he is in regard to us, which, generally ſpeaking, is even among perſons of the inferior ſtations in life, more juſt, more ſatisfactory, more adapted to promote virtue and happineſs, than it ever was among heathen nations, not excepting even the generality of their philoſophers, or could be by means of their received mythology. What human, mean, contemptible ideas did they form of their gods in general, of their diſpoſitions, of their actions, of their pleaſures! What weakneſſes, what paſſions, what crimes, were aſcribed to them! And how little was even the father of gods and men, as the Greeks and Romans ſtyled their ſovereign deity, exempted from them! How much juſter are the notions diffuſed by chriſtianity in this particular, among mankind of every ſtation, of every age, of every mode of life! Indeed even theſe corrected conceptions

ceptions are extremely imperfect, and muſt ever remain ſo, ſince finite man is not capable of comprehending infinity. The beſt conceptions indeed with many chriſtians are mingled with various errors. But amidſt all theſe imperfections and defects, they are ſtill incomparably better and worthier than the former were. What chriſtian, however moderately informed, but knows and believes that God is the moſt holy, the moſt perfect, the beſt of beings; that he is almighty, all-knowing, everywhere preſent, ſupremely juſt and ſupremely good; that he cannot do evil, and tempts no man to wickedneſs; that he loves virtue and integrity above all things; that he abhors every ſpecies of iniquity and ſin; and that there are no better means of pleaſing him and of ſecuring his favour, than by doing juſtice and loving mercy, and by promoting like him the beſt intereſts of mankind? And are there not thouſands of perſons, at preſent among chriſtians, for one among the heathens, who raiſe themſelves to ſtill higher and far more adequate conceptions of the deity; who carefully ſeparate every thing that is weak, human, circumſcribed, from theſe conceptions; who contemplate and revere God as a being uniting in himſelf whatever is great and good and beautiful and perfect, inceſſantly employed in beneficence, in willing, intending and producing only happineſs; who is to be won by no outward tokens of reverence, to be ſoothed by no rites or offerings; who

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is infinitely ſuperior to all human paſſions, to all the emotions of wrath, of partiality, of revenge; who requires no ſlaviſh dread of him from us, but only filial reverence and love; and who is ſupremely worthy of our profoundeſt reverence, of our moſt ardent adoration, of our ſincereſt affection, of our moſt cheerful obedience, and our firmeſt confidence!

Add to this more adequate knowledge of God, the general and firm belief of our immortality and of the future retribution, which chriſtianity, wherever it has been promulgated and received, has ſo deeply imprinted on the hearts of men, and ſo intimately interwoven with their whole ſyſtem of thought, that even the moſt violent attacks of infidelity are unable with the generality to prevail againſt it. Conſider likewiſe, that this belief inculcates ſuch an immortality and ſuch a retribution, as has a reference to the moral conduct of mankind in this life, to virtue and vice; and thence conclude, how favourable this faith muſt, generally ſpeaking, be to the improvement and compoſure of mankind, and how much greater efficacy it muſt have to this effect than the obſcure, uncertain, doubtful, falſe, immoral opinions concerning this doctrine which obtained in the heathen world, and which, it is evident were not much regarded by the commonalty, and were looked upon by the philoſophers as abſtruſe and inexplicable problems.

A ſecond

A ſecond claſs of general benefits, for which our thanks are due to chriſtianity, relates to human virtue and probity. Theſe have likewiſe upon the whole been great gainers by it. The notions of virtue are in general more juſt among chriſtians, than they formerly were among the heathens. Every one knows, that the eſſence of virtue conſiſts neither in bodily ſtrength, nor in the valour that braves all dangers; neither in courage nor intrepidity in war, nor in the great achievements of heroes and conquerors, commonly not leſs deſtructive than renowned. Every one knows, that it conſiſts not merely in abſtinence from groſs and flagrant crimes, or in particular actions, though juſt and good, but that it includes the whole turn of mind and the whole ſeries of conduct; that it is expreſſive of our intire moral perfection; that he is virtuous, who is and does all that he ought to be and do, according to his abilities, his vocation and his circumſtances, whoſe ſentiments and behaviour are regulated by the will of God and the injunctions of his law. It is a generally known and received principle, that real virtue conſiſts not in attachment and affection to certain perſons or to a particular nation, founded on contempt and hatred towards the reſt of the human ſpecies, but in an enlarged deſire and a ſtrenuous endeavour to promote the happineſs of all mankind. And how much more adapted is this conception of it, for which we are chiefly indebted to chriſtianity, to further

further and confirm the tranquillity, the ſecurity and the welfare of human ſociety, than that barbarous, falſely called patriotic virtue, which paſſed for everything in the moſt celebrated ages of the old heathen world, and which is ſtill ſo often extolled by partial judges to the diſparagement of chriſtian virtue! But particularly the ſilent and domeſtic virtues, the virtues of common life, whoſe beneficial influence on the public welfare is ſo various and laſting, have acquired a greater dignity by chriſtianity; they have obtained the deſerved though otherwiſe not acknowledged precedence over the boaſted heroic virtues, which for the moſt part were founded on injuſtice and violence.

Again, the doctrine of virtue is among chriſtians cloſely connected with the doctrine of God and religion, and is therefore to every man, and eſpecially to the ſubordinate claſſes of mankind, much plainer, much more fixed and much more efficacious, than it could poſſibly be among the heathens. Among them religion and virtue were two diſtinct things, not connected together; nay frequently in direct oppoſition to each other. The heathens, that is, individual perſons, or ſome few particular philoſophers among them, had a morality; but paganiſm or the pagan religion had none. Morality therefore reſted intirely either on the natural ſenſe of the difference between right and wrong, which was debilitated and almoſt deſtroyed by errors and vices; or on philoſophical inveſtigations

concerning the nature and connections of man and the material world, totally above the comprehenſion of the generality of their fellow citizens. Chriſtianity, as well as Socrates, but in a far loftier ſenſe and in a much more general and efficacious manner, has brought down true wiſdom from heaven to the earth — has accommodated it to the underſtanding and the heart of every man — has drawn it from the ſchools of the learned, mixed it with common life; and, by blending religion and morality together, has rendered eaſy and important the knowledge of our deſtination and the practice of our duties.

How many arguments, how many motives to probity and virtue, does this happy conjunction of morality with religion afford the chriſtian, who is not totally ignorant or inattentive! He cannot avoid making ſuch reflections as theſe on a thouſand occaſions: God, my creator, my preſerver, my benefactor, my judge, requires me to do this, and to abſtain from the other. This he has expreſsly commanded me; that he has as expreſsly forbidden. If I do the one, he will bleſs and reward me; if I do not abſtain from the other, he will call me to account, and the conſequence will be fatal. My life and my fortunes are both in his hand; my all depends on his grace and favour; without them I cannot hope for ſucceſs, and nothing can ſhield me from the effects of his diſpleaſure. From how many iniquities muſt theſe reflections

tions reſtrain him, though they ſhould not be altogether juſt, though they ſhould be accompanied by many erroneous conceptions; and to how many worthy, good, generous, public-ſpirited actions muſt they incite him! How much muſt conſcientiouſneſs, integrity, and fidelity in ſecret, be thereby promoted!

Both hiſtory and experience uniformly confirm theſe good effects of chriſtianity, in regard to the moral conduct of mankind. It is not to be denied, that many inhuman and deſtructive vices, which heatheniſm tolerated and favoured, are now, by means of the chriſtian doctrine, if not intirely exterminated from amongſt its confeſſors, branded with ſo much infamy and diſgrace, that they are no longer allowed to be named. It is not to be denied, that, on the whole, more integrity and honour, more fidelity and confidence in commercial and other tranſactions between man and man, prevail among chriſtians than amongſt the moſt poliſhed nations that are not chriſtian. It is not to be denied, that the ſentiments of general philanthropy and beneficence, and the indications of them, are far more frequent and effective among them than ever they were among the heathens. The erection and endowment of ſo many hoſpitals, ſo many inſtitutions for the maintenance of orphans, for the comfort of the poor and the ſick, of which we find comparatively but few among the heathens, are ſpeaking examples of it. In

general, without partiality, we are fully juſtified in affirming, that among chriſtian nations, taken at large, the knowledge of obligation and virtue, an averſion to wickedneſs, and a love of goodneſs, and therefore their morality, is greater and more general, the reverence for the deity and his laws more operative, the conſciences of individuals more tender and delicate, and in particular the mild and ſocial virtues are far more common than they ever were among the people of any nation, that we know of, antecedent to the coming of Chriſt.

A third claſs of general advantages for which we are indebted to chriſtianity, comprehends the compoſure of the human mind, and the eſtabliſhment of our hopes. How conſiderably have theſe been gainers by thoſe eſſential parts of chriſtianity, and which are peculiarly its own, the doctrines of Providence and the divine government of the world, of the forgiveneſs of ſins, of the immortality of the ſoul and of the life to come! The heathen, at leaſt among the Greeks and Romans, regarded his divinities either as indolent beings, totally unconcerned about the affairs of mortals, or as ſelfiſh, partial and capricious beings, eaſily provoked and hard to be appeaſed. He knew not in what relation he ſtood to them, what he was to fear from their diſpleaſure or to expect from their favour. He was forced to conſole himſelf with the abſolute neceſſity of gods and men, with a blind and inevitable fate. On the other hand the chriſtian, the unlearned as well as the learned,

learned, the pooreſt day-labourer as well as the exalted amongſt the people, the chriſtian is acquainted with truths which have quite a different influence on the repoſe of his mind. There is, thus can he reflect on all occaſions, and thus does he in fact very often think — There is a being ſupremely wiſe and ſupremely good, who is intereſted about us all, whoſe creatures and children we are, who loves and provides for us all. Nothing can happen without his will; and God, the Allmerciful, wills conſtantly the beſt. Nothing is impoſſible to him; he is able to deliver from death. To them that love him, all things muſt tend to good. If he be for us, none can be againſt us. His ſtrength is mighty in weakneſs. He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. How much do theſe and the like reflections alleviate the hardeſt toils, the greateſt indigence, the ſevereſt afflictions, to many thouſands of chriſtians! How much courage and confidence do they impart to them in misfortunes and perils! If we frequented the cottages of the poor, the dwellings of the lower claſſes of people, and made ourſelves more acquainted with their habitual manner of thinking, we ſhould perceive how much comfort and ſerenity the chriſtian doctrine affords them all, almoſt without exception, becauſe they receive and believe it in ſimplicity of heart, are free from thoſe doubts with which the philoſophers, as they are called, are perpetually tormented, rely

firmly on what the ſcripture tells them, and conſtantly ſuppoſe God particularly employed in their concerns and in the diſpoſal of their fortunes; and then we ſhould rightly judge of the advantage chriſtians muſt have, in this reſpect likewiſe, over all, even the moſt civilized nations, that were or are not chriſtian.

How much more eaſily farther may the chriſtian, oppreſſed by the guilt of his ſins and the terror of puniſhment, quiet his mind, than any other man who finds himſelf in the ſame perplexity, but knows not the chriſtian doctrine! The chriſtian knows, and knows it with aſſurance, that God is inclined to pity and to ſpare, that he will forgive the contrite and converted ſinner all his iniquities without exception, and remit the penalty due to tranſgreſſion. He knows, and knows definitively, what in this reſpect he has to do: he has no need to conſider with anxious uncertainty what multitudes of offerings, what coſtly preſents, what myſtical atonements and expiations, or what auſtere and rigid acts of penance, will procure his pardon; but ſo ſoon as he draws nigh to his creator and judge in ſincerity of heart, abhors and forſakes his wickedneſs, and, effectually determined on a better conduct, holds true to his purpoſe, he may immediately promiſe himſelf the grace of the Moſt High, and his heart condemns him no more. What a healing and reviving balm muſt theſe chriſtian doctrines have poured

ed into the wounded conſciences and tortured hearts of thouſands and thouſands, who muſt otherwiſe have become a prey to the horrors of deſpair!

We may advance the ſame thing in regard to the dread of death and the hope of a better life. Though the philoſopher of heatheniſm, with a perplexed and doubting mind, or in the horrible expectation of utter extinction, ſaw death approach him; ſaw himſelf going perhaps for ever into the dominion of darkneſs, into the region of ſhadows, into the land of forgetfulneſs, where, for anything he could tell, he ſhould be as though he had never been; though the generality of them met this ghaſtly tyrant either with a reckleſs inſenſibility, or with a mind ſtruggling between darkneſs and light, between fear and hope; yet chriſtians in general, being firmly perſuaded of their immortality, and of the eternal life that awaits them after death, form juſter conceptions of the future ſtate, can more eaſily and with greater certainty, promiſe themſelves a better portion there than they have had on earth; meet their diſſolution therefore with far greater comfort and reſignation; and many thouſands of them actually enter the gate of death without diſmay, and in the joyous, undoubted expectation of an everlaſting continuance of exiſtence, a glorious reſurrection, an inceſſant, ever-increaſing felicity. Infallible arguments, that leave us no room to doubt that there not only may be, but that there actually is among chriſtians far more comfort and hope and rational peace

of mind, than was ever to be found among the heathens.

Recollect at the ſame time, my pious hearers, for we cannot expatiate on all particulars, recollect the multitudes of inſtitutions and means for promoting knowledge, virtue and the inward tranquillity of mankind, that owe their origin to chriſtianity,

Think on the numerous ſchools, erected in all the towns and moſt of the villages in chriſtian countries, and which, conſidered as ſchools of religion and morality, were wholly unknown among the heathens, at leaſt among the Greeks and Romans, and likewiſe among our anceſtors, the antient inhabitants of theſe dominions. Defective and illiberal as the generality of theſe ſchools in more than one reſpect may be, yet children are there brought to the knowledge of the only true God, and diſciplined in his fear, inſtructed in their duties, cautioned againſt ſin and vice, and incited to virtue by various ways.

Reflect on the paſtoral office everywhere introduced into the chriſtian church, devoted to the inſtruction, the encouragement, the comfort of individuals of every condition, age and ſex; an inſtitution peculiar in its kind, being unknown in any other religion, and which certainly a Socrates, a Plato, a Cicero, a Confucius, would have admired as the moſt excellent and beneficial of all others, if they could have ſeen it in their days. Let the paſtoral office be ever ſo much abuſed, let the delivery

of

of the chriſtian doctrines be ever ſo defective; yet the conveyance of inſtruction in the moſt important doctrines of religion and virtue, in ſo public a manner, at ſuch frequent intervals, and often with the moſt inward ſentiment and conviction, muſt infinitely more contribute to the amelioration and compoſure of mankind than all the ſolemnities and ceremonies of the heathens were ever able to do. Take this likewiſe into the account, that all theſe advantages, inſtitutions and eſtabliſhments, are ſo conſtituted in the very nature of them, that they cannot fail by degrees of becoming common, and of attaining to a conſiderable degree of perfection and efficacy; and that they are even now becoming conſtantly, and with no ſlow progreſſion, more perfect and efficacious than they have hitherto been: and you will not be able to deny that we, and mankind in general, are uncommonly much beholden to chriſtianity.

There are ſtill a variety of other conſiderable advantages for which we ſtand indebted to the influence of this heavenly doctrine, and which relate in great meaſure to the outward condition of man. We muſt however at preſent confine ourſelves to a ſlight indication of them: that polygamy, for example, that fertile ſource of depopulation, of effeminacy and domeſtic miſery, is aboliſhed; that the inhuman, barbarous cuſtom of expoſing children, on account of ſome accidental infirmity, or becauſe

they

they were disagreeable or burdensome to their parents, and consigning them to unavoidable ruin, is abhorred by all men; that slavery, that unjustifiable degradation of human nature, as it formerly obtained among the Greeks and Romans and other nations of antiquity, is, at least in christian Europe, much diminished; that, by the strenuous exertions of generous and noble-minded men, we may entertain the pleasing hope that it will, ere long, be held in universal detestation; that laws and customs, with all their allowed imperfections and inconsistences, are still in general mild and more humane; that those ruthless and atrocious maxims so commonly practised heretofore by nations at war with each other, are now scarce ever heard of; that war itself in many respects is carried on with less cruelty and devastation; that the conquered are spared, and neither deprived of their lives nor their liberty; that the apprehension of the human dignity, the recognition of the natural equality of mankind, and a due deference for each other among individuals, are better understood and felt, and are every day becoming more universal and effective; that many corrupt passions, destructive to society, as revenge, ambition, tyranny, are restrained to narrower bounds, and meet with more powerful controul, or are directed to a nobler channel: for all these advantages we are indebted, though indeed not altogether and alone, but in a great measure, to christianity and its

influence

influence on the general opinion and manners of its confeſſors; and how greatly are the peace, the ſecurity, the welfare of ſocial life, thereby improved!

So many, ſuch great advantages, my pious hearers, in reſpect to knowledge, to virtue and integrity, to our tranquillity and hopes and our external welfare, do we owe to the doctrine of Jeſus, whoſe nativity we this day commemorate. And ſhould not the conſideration of theſe advantages, which we all poſſeſs and enjoy, inſpire us with gladneſs at our felicity, and with gratitude to God, the author and giver of it? Yes, chriſtian feſtivals are real days of rejoicing, but with a joy that relates particularly to the bounty of God, our father in heaven, who allows us to feel the whole worth of his parental protection and love, and impreſſes our hearts with gratitude to him. Let us then excite theſe joys in our hearts, and endeavour to render them poignant and lively by reflection. To this end, let our imagination convey us back to the times of heatheniſm, let us viſit the temples of the gods, repreſent to ourſelves the nugatory rites that were paid them by their worſhipers, and the ſuperſtitious terrors that ſurrounded theſe abodes of impoſture; let us lament over the far greater ignorance, wickedneſs and deſtitution of all comfort, that formerly prevailed among our ſpecies; let us bewail the miſerable fate of the nations, who blindly followed their ſightleſs guides, who proſtrated themſelves before wood and ſtone; who lived as it were without God and without

out hope in the world, and among whom alſo our forefathers were; and then compare our happier condition with theirs, and render due honour to chriſtianity, by which this beneficial revolution has been brought about.

Or, if we cannot make this compariſon, from a deficiency of hiſtorical information, we need not go ſo far from our own times and from the preſent prevailing notions; let us at leaſt reflect what condition our knowledge, our virtue, our hope, our outward welfare, the ſecurity and peace of ſociety, would be in, had we been deſtitute of the advantage we have now conſidered as the fruit of chriſtianity. In all probability we ſhould then have lain buried in the thickeſt darkneſs of ignorance and ſuperſtition; we ſhould have been blind idolaters, miſerable ſlaves, dupes or impoſtors, the ſport of our groſs propenſities and paſſions; fearful, hopeleſs, wretched mortals. Now are we children of light; men who know their creator, their obligations, and the ultimate end of their creation; worſhipers of the true God, comforted by his providence, by his grace, by the expectation of a better, an eternal life; members of a civilized ſociety, where vice is deteſted, where virtue is eſteemed and revered; where upon the whole much integrity, much philanthropy, much veracity and confidence, is actually to be found. How happy then is it for us that Jeſus was born into the world, and promulgated his doctrine! What thanks do we not owe to him and to his heavenly father,

father, who ſent him to us as our teacher and deliverer!

And how much happier may we ſtill become, by employing his doctrine aright! Let us not be ſatisfied with the general advantages it procures to all nations and languages. Let us ſtrive to be partakers in the higheſt perfection and happineſs, to which it is adapted to lead us. Let us therefore continually improve in the knowledge of this excellent doctrine; ever apply it more ſedulouſly to ourſelves; ever allow ourſelves to be more and more animated by its ſpirit, and ever ſtudy to think and to live in a more chriſtian manner. Let us follow its directions to the obtaining of felicity, with a cheerful and intire reſignation of heart, and obſerve all its precepts with unremitted attention. Thus ſhall we ſtrive to become by its means perfectly free, perfectly wiſe, perfectly virtuous, perfectly and eternally bleſſed! God grant, my dear friends, God grant that this may be the progreſſively happy portion of us all!

Chriſtmas-day.

SERMON XIX.

The high Value and Excellence of the Human Soul.

GOD, to thee belong majeſty and power, glory and dominion, adoration and praiſe; for all that is in heaven and on earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom; thou reigneſt over all. Thy kingdom is immenſe; and thy dominion is gracious and merciful, juſt and wiſe. Thou loveſt all thy creatures, and wouldſt render them as perfect and happy as their nature and their relations allow. We likewiſe, o God, may boaſt of thee as our gracious ruler, as our beneficent father. Thou haſt created us, however humble the ſtation we fill in thy kingdom, after thy own image. Thou haſt made us little lower than the angels, crowned us with glory and honour, and conſtituted us lords over the works of thy hands. Thou haſt elevated our ſouls into rational and immortal ſpirits, and rendered us capable of everlaſting felicity. And when we had rejected this felicity by our ſins, thou even ſenteſt us, o miracle of grace and condeſcenſion! thou even

ſenteſt

ſenteſt us thy ſon, the only-begotten, to be a ſaviour and deliverer; and now we may preſume again to call ourſelves thy children and to hope for an everlaſting felicity in communion with thee. What are we, o God, that thou haſt done ſo much for us, that thou haſt ſo highly favoured us? Praiſed be thy glorious and inexhauſtible goodneſs! We acknowledge, we feel the infinite worth of thy gifts; but we alſo feel that we can never worthily thank thee for them. Oh that our whole lives might be a never ending act of praiſe to thy great name! Oh that we conſtantly ſhewed by the beſt uſe of the benefits and advantages which thou haſt granted us, how highly we prize them, and how much we are bounden to thee for them! O God, do thou thyſelf ſupport, confirm theſe good diſpoſitions in us. Let their efficacy be manifeſted in the whole of our future conduct. Bleſs to this end the meditations we are now about to begin. Teach us to apprehend the entire value of our ſouls, and at all times to think and act conſiſtently with that knowledge. Hearken to our prayer for the ſake of Chriſt, our mediator and interceſſor, in whoſe name we further call upon thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

MATTHEW xvi. 26.

What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?

RIGHTLY to aſcertain the value of things, not to prize them higher, and not to be fonder of them than they deſerve; to connect the preſent with the future, and in drawing our inferences to look not only at the former, but alſo at the latter; never to loſe ſight of our grand object, and to regard and uſe all other things only as means to the advancement of it: this is the character of the wiſe man. To judge of outward things only by the firſt impreſſion they make on our ſenſes, which is often a very fallacious one; to treat empty trifles as matters of great moment, and important concerns as contemptible trifles; to follow blind inſtincts or headſtrong paſſions, in the choice of the objects of our love and eſteem; to ſacrifice a great future fortune to a preſent momentary pleaſure or tranſient advantage; to take the means for the end, or to live in the world without a determinate plan entirely at random: this is the character of the fool. But who is that wiſe man, if it be not the chriſtian, who thinks and acts conſiſtently with his heavenly calling? Who is this fool, if it be not the ſenſual man, who follows his

depraved appetites, and barters heaven for the goods of the earth? The former, the true chriſtian, holds all that is terreſtrial and tranſient for what it actually is, and will hereafter be; and this moderates his affection towards it, and renders the loſs of it by no means intolerable: the latter, the mere ſenſual man, ſeeks his whole happineſs in earthly things; and if they chance to be raviſhed from him, he thinks himſelf caſt into the loweſt depth of miſery, as indeed he is, ſince he has nothing left to compenſate his loſs. The former places his affections on the worthieſt objects; his whole heart is devoted to God, to religion, to virtue and friendſhip: the latter beſtows his whole love and eſteem on ſuch things as are unworthy of them, inadequate to the capacities of man, and hoſtile to his vocation. The former knows that he has an immortal ſpirit, and all his endeavours tend to render that nobler part of his being more perfect, and more fitted for that ſuperior ſtate to which he is hastening: the latter forgets as it were that he has a reaſonable ſoul, that is to live for ever, and confines his cares to his outward condition, and to whatever can flatter his ſenſes. The former lives for eternity, and conſiders his dwelling here on earth as a preparation for it: the latter confines his thoughts, deſires and views to the ſhort moment of his earthly pilgrimage, and loſes ſight of the term to which it leads. From this contraſt of the temper and conduct of the true chriſtian, with the temper and conduct of the vicious

man, can we for a moment doubt that the former follows the dictates of wiſdom, and that the latter betrays the moſt egregious folly? Whence however proceeds this difference in their ſentiments and actions? The chriſtian recognizes and feels the whole value, the high dignity, the important deſtination of his ſoul; he frequently reflects upon it; he compares what he is and does, impartially with what he ought to be and to do; and ſtrives to conduct himſelf agreeably to his knowledge. The other on the contrary allows all this to eſcape him, ſeldom or never thinks on it, and judges and acts in the generality and the moſt important of caſes, as if he belonged to an inferior order of beings. Of ſo much conſequence is it, my pious hearers, that we ſhould frame to ourſelves adequate conceptions of the value and excellency of our ſoul, and that theſe conceptions ſhould have a powerful influence on our conduct. May it be granted me, under the divine aſſiſtance and bleſſing, by my preſent diſcourſe, to excite you to ſuch a deportment, as is conformable to them! What a value, what a dignity muſt the human ſoul poſſeſs, of what a perfection and happineſs muſt it be ſuſceptible, ſince Jeſus, the delegate of God, in whom are all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge, ſo expreſsly admoniſhes us in our text againſt everything that may be injurious to our ſoul, and declares the gain of the whole world, the poſſeſſion of the greateſt opulence and the moſt ſplendid worldly circumſtances, to be nothing in

compariſon of theſe injuries, by ſaying: "What ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?" Well then, my friends, let us conſider the high value, the excellency and dignity of the human ſoul: but let us likewiſe attend to the behaviour that is proper for ſuch noble, ſuch highly favoured creatures as we are. Theſe two conſiderations will compoſe the matter of my diſcourſe; and they are certainly of a nature to merit your utmoſt attention.

The nature and origin of the human ſoul, its great capacities and powers; what God has done and ſtill does for its preſervation and the advancement of its happineſs; its appointment and its future lot: all theſe proclaim it of exalted worth, and ſet that worth beyond all doubt to reflecting creatures.

How loſty is the origin of the human ſoul! How far in this reſpect does it excel the body! This is formed of the duſt. It is produced by generation. It lies concealed in other terreſtrial bodies, and its developement is occaſioned by mortal man. The ſoul, as the ſcripture ſpeaks, is of divine deſcent, is the offspring of God. God is in a peculiar ſenſe her creator and father, as he is the creator and father of ſuperior ſpirits: ſhe is therefore related to thoſe exalted beings. Yes, ſhe bears the impreſs of him who made her; and even the ſtate of meanneſs and of moral corruption, wherein ſhe is at preſent, can-

not totally efface the glorious image. Her reaſon is a ray of his unbounded intellect; her freedom and power are derived from his unlimited and conſtantly efficient might; her love to what is beautiful and good, to order and perfection, her friendly and beneficent affections, are emanations, if I may ſo ſpeak, of his pure holineſs, of his eternal and unalterable benignity.

Her ſpiritual nature, elevated ſo far above all that we diſcern about us and in connection with us, bears witneſs alſo of her excellency and of her ſupernal extraction. She tells us intelligibly enough that ſhe is not of the earth, but of heaven. Had we already no plain and clear conception of the nature of our ſoul; even in affirming, that ſhe is a ſimple eſſence, it would be much the ſame as ſaying that ſhe is not, like matter, compoſed of parts: yet our reflection, as well as our moral ſenſe, would inform us that ſhe is ſomewhat wholly different from the body ſhe inhabits, and is far more excellent than it. The body, my friends, continues not a ſingle moment in the ſame ſtate in which it was before. It is continually undergoing various alterations, which, imperceptible as in part they may be, yet, taken together, are very conſiderable. It is conſtantly loſing numberleſs little particles, which are as conſtantly, by means of air, of food and drink, replaced by others; and thus, in the courſe of a few years, our body is as it were totally renewed. But amidſt all theſe revolutions of its groſſer ſhell, the ſoul remains

mains invariably the ſame. She is conſcious at every period of time, that ſhe is exactly what ſhe was in any antecedent portion of her life. She can connect the paſt, the preſent and the future together, though the paſt be long ſince paſt, and for the future there be no reaſon diſcoverable in the material world. She begets thoughts, ſhe draws inferences, ſhe exerts powers, which not only have nothing ſimilar to what we term magnitude, figure, ſolidity, motion, but are contradictory to theſe ſeveral properties of matter. All her ideas, diverſified and innumerable as they may be, concentrate as it were in one point, which we muſt neceſſarily conceive as indiviſible. She is therefore of a quite different, of a far more permanent and unchangeable nature than our body, and all other things that fall under the perception of our ſenſes.

Hence likewiſe it is, my pious hearers, that the well-being of the ſoul depends not ſo much on the outward circumſtances in which ſhe finds herſelf, as on her own moral conſtitution. As ſhe may be wretched while in poſſeſſion of the moſt brilliant advantages of this life, and be ſad amidſt the free uſe of all the ſources of joy that human ſociety can diſcloſe, if error, paſſion and vice, ſhed darkneſs and diſmay upon her: ſo can ſhe on the other hand be contented in the abſence of all the goods of fortune, and ſerene under the burden of ſevere afflictions, if the knowledge of truth, the conſciouſneſs of innocence, the ſentiment of her dignity, and the

proſpect of the future world, inſpire her with light and peace, with hope and aſſurance. She can maintain her noble grandeur in the loweſt ſtation, her liberty in the bonds of ſlavery, her cheerfulneſs at the ſight of death and corruption: ſhe can preſerve her virtue amidſt all temptations, her fortitude in all dangers, and her greatneſs under all oppreſſions. She ſoars above everything earthly and viſible; preſſes by meditation into the very abodes of the perfected juſt; obtains a foretaſte of their purer joys; and looks down from that eminence on all that is tranſient and vain with pity and contempt. Her perfection and happineſs are built on ſuch properties, perceptions, ſenſations and habitudes, as no changes of fortune can affect; which ſhe cannot loſe, though heaven and earth ſhould paſs away. How excellent then muſt be the nature of the human ſoul! What a value muſt theſe advantages confer upon it, beyond all that is material!

Caſt ſecondly a look at her capacities and powers, pious hearers, and you will ſtill more plainly perceive her excellency and her value. How noble are the occupations of the human mind! Of what a high perfection is it ſuſceptible! How many great and aſtoniſhing things is man able to execute with it! He thinks, and is conſcious of it. He forms to himſelf diſtinct ideas of external objects, and can increaſe the number of theſe ideas without end. He compares his conceptions with one another,

ther, judges of their agreement or their oppoſition, and combines them in thouſands of various ways. He proceeds from known things to unknown, from the eaſy to the difficult; adopts principles, draws concluſions from them, links theſe concluſions together, and is ever opening new proſpects in the unbounded regions of truth that lie before him. Would his conceptions retire, he detains them. Are they obſcure; he diffuſes a new light upon them. Are they vaniſhed away; he calls them back. With his intellect, man traces his own capacities and powers, and obſerves the riſe, the progreſs and the varied combination of his reflections, his appetites and affections. By means of his underſtanding, man rules over all the beaſts of the earth; knows how to reſtrain their ſtrength and over-rule their ſubtlety by prudence, and to eaſe himſelf by their ſervice of the moſt fatiguing labours; and the whole inanimate and irrational creation is rendered ſubſervient to his profit and pleaſure. By his underſtanding, when providence has allotted him an exalted ſtation among his brethren, he comprehends the multifarious and complicated concerns of intire kingdoms and ſtates; judges of the ſtrength and the weakneſs of every particular diſtrict and of its relative poſition to the whole; is vigilant and provident for the benefit of all; knows how to connect the ſeveral capacities, the jarring intereſts, the oppoſite views and various talents of his ſubjects with each other, to keep

them in their due equilibrium, and to turn them all to the advancement of one and the ſame great end; enlightens and animates millions of perſons by the radiance he diffuſes around him, and governs them ſo, that in their ſovereign they revere the benign parent and benefactor. He proceeds ſtill farther with his intellect. By unremitted reflection and by the help of acute diſcernment, he dives into the ſecrets of nature; inveſtigates the latent cauſes, properties and effects of things; ſees and admires the wiſdom and art obſervable in the ſmalleſt inſect no leſs than in the ſtructure of the univerſe, and from obſervations on what are in themſelves apparently of little import, diſcovers the univerſal law by which the largeſt of the heavenly bodies roll. With his intellect man lifts himſelf from earth to heaven, meaſures the path and the diſtances of the ſtars, arranges them in claſſes, calculates their dimenſions, weighs their ſolidity, and ſeeks and finds the place where they have ſtood for thouſands of years, and where they may ſtand for ages to come. Nay, with his underſtanding man ſoars to the knowledge of the primordial ſource of all things, to the knowledge of him who is the creator and lord of mankind and of the univerſe, who is eſſential beauty and perfection, before whoſe grandeur and glory ſuns and worlds are as nothing. Even the infinite attributes of this moſt exalted being are not abſolutely hidden from him. He beholds them reſplendent in

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all his works, and ſtudies his eternal will from the conſtitutions and arrangements he has eſtabliſhed in nature.

And who, my friends, can define the boundaries of the imagination and memory of the human ſoul! The former traverſes the immenſe realm of creation, far ſwifter than light; ranges from one ſolar and planetary ſyſtem to another; forms new worlds to itſelf; connects the paſt with the preſent, and pierces to the remoteſt futurity. The latter, the memory, can reſtore to its priſtine combination and arrangement all that we have ever felt, all that we have ever thought, and of which no trace remains without us; it can ſtore up unnumbered ideas of the moſt diſſimilar things, without confuſion or commixture, for our future uſe; it can contain within itſelf the whole circle of arts and ſciences, all the remarkable tranſactions that we read of in ancient and modern hiſtory, the inventions and diſcoveries of mankind, always augmenting this enormous ſtock of knowledge, and at all times delivering to us from it whatever is beſt adapted to our preſent purpoſe.

With what faculties, farther, is the human ſoul endowed! The faculty by which, of its mere will, not as an effect of a natural and irreſiſtible inſtinct, but from free choice, with complete conſciouſneſs, and to wiſely directed aims, the moſt diverſified movements in our body inſtantaneouſly and infallibly ariſe, and by means of them a thouſand

ſand revolutions, in the objects without us, as inſtantaneouſly and infallibly take place, and at its command as ſuddenly and certainly ceaſe: this faculty is an image of the omnipotence that calls that which is not into being, and orders that to paſs away which is to exiſt no more. It is a faculty that we know not how to explain, but which undoubtedly has ſomething godlike in it, and exalts man far above the inanimate and the irrational creation; a faculty that likewiſe muſt have a great and beneficial influence on our moral conduct, if we ſtudied to exert it with greater conſideration, and learnt to apply it aright.

In ſhort, how far may not the human ſoul advance in moral perfection? She is not neceſſitated to follow a blind and irreſiſtible inſtinct. She determines herſelf. She acts from diſcernment and choice, from knowledge and ſpeculation. She knows how to diſtinguiſh the ſemblances of good and evil from what is actually ſo; and even, by her inferences, to bring the remoteſt conſequences of things into conſideration. She is ſuſceptible of the nobleſt ſentiments, and capable of the moſt magnanimous actions. Has the deſire of pleaſing God and of accompliſhing his will, has the love of truth and virtue once got the aſcendant in her, then may ſhe withſtand and repel the ſtrongeſt incitements to ſin, either outward or inward. She can cheerfully ſacrifice fame and authority, riches

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and honour, eaſe and fortune, health and life, to her duty. To reſemble God, her heavenly father, in juſtice and beneficence, to copy him with increaſing accuracy, and to render herſelf continually more capable of nearer communion with him, is the ultimate aim of her inclinations and efforts. This exalted aim ſhe purſues with undeviating ardour; ſpontaneouſly rejects everything that might divert her from it; becomes conſtantly wiſer and better, and never ceaſes from purſuing a more elevated ſtage of perfection. What a value, my friends, what a dignity muſt the human ſoul poſſeſs, adorned as ſhe is with ſuch capacities and powers, and capable of ſuch a high degree, of ſo inceſſant an elevation of knowledge and virtue!

It is true, that the ſame human ſoul, from whoſe capacities and powers we conclude of her excellence, has likewiſe her weak ſide; and were I to deny it, or endeavour to conceal it from you, the experience of all mankind of every age would convict me of falſehood and inſincerity. Yes, my friends, we all but too frequently experience how eaſily our ſoul faints under the preſſure of intenſe application; how ſuddenly ſhe is precipitated from the heights to which ſhe had climbed, and how often ſhe fatigues herſelf in vain to ſcan and explore them. We all but too much experience how eaſily we are miſled into error, how quickly we ſuffer ourſelves to be hurried away by impetuous paſſions; how often we take the ſemblance of a

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ſubject for its material quality; and how difficult it is for us to regain the path of truth and virtue, when once we have deviated from it. All of us experience but too much, that at preſent we are ſtill ſurrounded by great darkneſs and uncertainty; that our knowledge is only patchwork; that in moſt reſpects we walk by faith and not by ſight; and that in ſhort the nobleſt capacities of our nature can only be carried to a conſiderable degree of perfection on earth by a very ſmall proportion of mankind. But be upon your guard, my pious hearers, againſt drawing from theſe experiences any inferences derogatory to the worth and dignity of the human ſoul. Conſider under what adverſe circumſtances ſhe lives and acts in this world. Conſider how much ſhe is oppreſſed by the corruption of ſin; how much ſhe is confined by the diſorders and infirmities of the body; how much ſhe is impeded in her functions by the wants and occupations of this life, which demand the greateſt part of our time and the principal exertions of our faculties; and how often her ardour is even repreſſed in education; think what impediments ſhe muſt find in the buſtle of buſineſs, the avocations of our ſenſes, and the din of a clamorous world; and repreſent to yourſelves what ſhe will be, when theſe circumſtances ſhall be changed, theſe impediments removed, and ſhe finds herſelf in another and better ſcene. Then will ſhe firſt ſhew herſelf in her complete vigour, and if we at preſent pay a becoming

becoming attention to her improvement and ſanctification, will proceed with rapid ſteps from one degree of perfection to another. Here, according to the wiſe conſtitution eſtabliſhed by the creator, ſhe neither can nor ought to be ſo perfect as by her nature ſhe is adapted to become; and therefore ſhe thus loſes no more of her worth and excellency, than the diamond loſes of its intrinſic value by not being cut and poliſhed.

But, it may be ſaid, what are theſe capacities and powers of the human ſoul, let them be as great as they may, when compared with the capacities and faculties of ſuperior beings? Indeed, pious hearers, when I conſider the immeaſurable magnitude of the univerſe; when I reflect how probable it is, that we occupy but one of the loweſt places among the intelligent creatures of God; when I muſe upon the great interval between mankind and the higheſt order of ſpirits, which may be as great, and probably much greater than the interval between the acuteſt human intellect and that of the ſimpleſt infant: at ſuch times I am loſt in my own reflections; it then appears to me as if the aſcribing of ſuch value to my ſoul as I am wont to give it, were nothing more than a ſuggeſtion of over-weening pride. In thoſe moments revelation ſteps in to my aid. That teaches me what God, the creator of ſpirits, has done for the human ſoul; and this frees me from all doubt that it muſt have a great worth in his ſight, who alone can infallibly judge of the value of things. I

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ſhall not at preſent obſerve how much the wiſdom and goodneſs of God is revealed in the ſtructure of the body which the ſoul inhabits; how curiouſly all the organs of ſenſe are adapted to its information; and how plainly all the methods of his providence tend to the advancement of its perfection. I ſhall not at preſent make my appeal to the frequency with which God has ſent extraordinary teachers to mankind, to diſcover to them his will, to recall them from their deviations and to promote their ſalvation; how often he has even employed celeſtial meſſengers, to reſcue them from dangers and to certify them of his gracious protection. I will now juſt remind you of the laſt and moſt glorious revelation of the divine grace promulgated to us by the goſpel. Chriſt, my friends, the only begotten ſon of God, the lord and head of angels, whoſe outgoings were from everlaſting, by whom God made the world, and ſtill governs it, who would have remained happy in himſelf, happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of his own perfections, happy in the adminiſtration and government of the moral world, though he had never caſt an eye of pity upon mortal man. He would have inhabited the praiſes of eternity though man had never been redeemed. Yet for our ſakes he leaves the glories of the heavens, he, to be here with us, forſakes the courts of everlaſting day, diſrobes himſelf of his authority and ſplendor, comes upon earth, takes our nature with all its infirmities upon him, lives among mankind, is

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their brother, their teacher, their mediator, ſubmits to every affliction which embitters human life, ſuffers for them unſpeakable pains, and dies at laſt an ignominious and an accurſed death as a ſacrifice for their ſins on the croſs, to ſave human ſouls from perdition, to enlighten, to improve, to ſanctify human ſouls, to prepare for them the way to communion with God and to everlaſting happineſs, to make them, from ſervants of ſin and death, the children of the Moſt High, heirs of a bleſſed immortality, citizens of heaven. Theſe proofs of divine love to mankind, ſo great, that all the perfection of created nature fades before it, and is but a foil to ſet off the brightneſs of redeeming love; theſe proofs elevate them far above all that we can underſtand or conceive; and this very proof of the divine love muſt neceſſarily give our nature a quite different, in fact an inexpreſſible dignity. Yes, God, when I contemplate theſe wonders of thy condeſcenſion and favour, I can no longer doubt that the human ſoul is precious in thy ſight, that thou loveſt it with paternal affection, that thou haſt deſigned it for exalted happineſs. Then any diſcouragement that may accidentally ariſe from my reflections on the immenſity of thy domain, on the countleſs myriads of thy worſhipers, and on the inconſiderable ſtation I fill amongſt them, vaniſhes from my mind. Then I recover from the amazement into which the conſideration of thy infinite greatneſs and my own inſignificancy had thrown me. I am ſenſible to the whole value,

value, the honour and the happineſs of being thy offspring, of bearing thy likeneſs, and of being in the neareſt alliance and cloſeſt union with thy ſon, and am forced to break out in the words of the pſalmiſt: "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him! what the ſon of man, that thou ſo ... ardeſt him!"

Figure to yourſelves laſtly, my friends, that you may perceive the worth and excellency of your ſouls, their deſtination and their future lot. Has not the reflection already ariſen in your minds from the foregoing conſiderations, that our ſoul is not here what by its nature it may and is deſigned to be; that its capacities and powers are far too great and noble to be completely exerted in the preſent ſtate of weakneſs? And may we not thence venture to infer, that the God who cannot poſſibly fail in his deſigns, and who imparts to his creatures no faculties which they never can employ, has not formed our ſoul for this terreſtrial ſcene alone, that this is but the firſt and loweſt ſtep on the ſcale of its exiſtence, that it is appointed to a continually advancing, to an eternal elevation? And muſt we not draw this inference from what God has done for our ſoul? Would he, who is eſſential wiſdom, who always exactly proportions his means to his ends, would he have made ſuch great preparatives, ſuch marvellous diſpoſals for the promotion of our natural and moral perfection, if he had produced us only that we might paſs a few years of rather animal than

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rational life, and then return again to nothing? How! God has made me capable of knowing him, of worſhiping him, of loving him, of ſeeking my whole felicity in him; and this capacity, from which I have a right to promiſe myſelf ſo much, which inſpires me with ſo ardent a deſire after a cloſer communion with this glorious being, I am to loſe in death! No, God cannot annihilate creatures whom he has endowed with ſuch faculties, and favoured ſo highly beſides; and if he deſtroy them not, they are ſafe from all deſtruction. If theſe concluſions have not ſufficient force to convince you, pious hearers, of this; then take the documents of the chriſtian revelation upon it. It diſſipates all the darkneſs and uncertainty which in this particular might ſtill remain. The ſun of righteouſneſs has riſen upon our regions, and poured its radiance on the path of immortality. Enlightened by the bright beams of chriſtianity, we authentically know that our ſouls ſhall not die, that they ſhall live for ever, that they ſhall exchange this world hereafter for a better. There will they unfold all their capacities and powers, and attain to the higheſt degree of activity and ſtrength. There will they proceed from one ſtep of knowledge to another, from virtue to ſuperior virtue, from happineſs to ſuperior happineſs, and nothing will impede them in their progreſs. Glorious arrangement! Happy portion! For ever ſhall we live and act, for ever be more perfect and happy, and for ever have an increaſing

participation in the divine nature. Yes, then will it firſt be ſeen that God has made man in his own image. Then will our nature appear in the full diſplay of its dignity, in all its magnificence and grandeur.

Lo, thus noble is thy origin, o man, thus extenſive are thy capacities, ſuch great things has God done for thee, ſo ſublime is thy appointment! Thy ſoul is of divine deſcent; it is capable of an ever-increaſing perfection; it is of infinite duration. Oh magnify thy creator; let all that is within thee praiſe his holy name! Be ſenſible to thy noble grandeur; forget not thy dignity; learn to honour thyſelf, and to think and act conſiſtently with thy worth. Rejoice in thy happineſs, and be always rendering thyſelf more qualified for it by wiſdom and virtue. But ſhudder likewiſe at the miſery, at the inconceivable miſery, of which this natural excellency makes thee ſuſceptible, and ſhun the way that leads to it, the way of vice, which degrades thee, which hurls thee from the throne to which thou art called, and renders thee a ſlave.

Oh how greatly I pity you, ye ſenſual and earthly-minded, who never riſe above viſible things, never ſeriouſly reflect on the ſpecial privileges granted you by your maker, on the perfection and glory for which he has deſigned you; who are inſenſible to your nobleſt powers, or miſapply them to voluptuouſneſs, to iniquity, to ſin; who are as it were all matter, and imagine that you live for no other purpoſe than to ſatisfy your corporeal wants, to aban-

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don yourſelves to animal gratifications, or to amaſs unprofitable treaſures! How can ye imagine that to this end God has ſo far exalted you above all the brute creation, that to this end he has employed ſo many extraordinary means for your deliverance and your ſalvation, or that in theſe purſuits you ſhall attain the end for which you were created! How can ye pretend to what is indeed the higheſt boaſt of man, that you honour the image of God within you, and are thus approximating that glorious being, by a continually nearer aſſimilation with him! No, you belie your noble grandeur, you debaſe yourſelves to an inferior claſs of beings; you defeat the great deſigns your creator has upon you; you prefer darkneſs to light, bondage to freedom, a merely ſenſual and animal life to one that is heavenly and divine. The exalted, the everlaſting happineſs of which your nature is capable, ye ſpurn from you with diſdain. Nay, this is not all: ye are thus preparing for yourſelves puniſhments, which will be ſo much the heavier as the talents are more excellent which God has committed to you, and which you abuſe. This ye may do, o fooliſh men; ye may enervate, deprave, diſgrace your ſoul, by folly and vice; ye may render it totally unſuſceptible of the favour of God and the felicity of the future world; ye may ſtupefy it, and conceal your ſhame and your miſery from yourſelves. But kill it ye cannot. It is immortal. It will live for ever. It will awake from its ſtupefaction in another ſtate; and then will

it feel the whole weight of the ſhame and miſery that lies upon it. Then will you experience, to your extreme conſternation, the truth of what our Saviour declares, that it will profit a man nothing to have gained the whole world, if he loſe his own ſoul; or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul? Lamentable proſpects! Tremendous expectations! Oh ſtrive to put your ſoul into a better frame, ere that great day arrive which ſhall decide your future lot. Raiſe yourſelves from the earth; rend yourſelves from the dominion of ſenſual luſts. Avail yourſelves of the gracious arrangements which God has made by Chriſt for the deliverance of our ſouls. Seek of him and in his doctrine that light which can enlighten you, that power which can amend and ſanctify you, that grace which can conſole and bleſs you. Accuſtom yourſelves to conſider and to judge of everything in its analogy with the futurity that awaits you, and purſue ſuch a courſe as is agreeable to the excellency of your nature.

Let the conſideration of this excellency of the human ſoul inſtruct and comfort you, ye poor and low among the people, to whom neither riches, nor illuſtrious pedigree, nor exalted ſtations procure any regard. Let it inſpire you, not with pride, but with a generous confidence, a lively ſentiment of your inherent dignity. Let it teach you contentedneſs in your condition. Make uſe of theſe conſiderations as your preſervatives from baſe ſentiments and a fawning demeanour. That which truly exalts mankind

kind above the irrational creation, what renders them capable of ſuch great perfection and happineſs, is common to you with the mightieſt of the earth, with princes and with monarchs. If you poſſeſs the eſſential and everlaſting privileges of man, how eaſily may you diſpenſe with the things that conſiſt more in outward ſhow than in intrinſic worth, and the poſſeſſion of which is confined to a few years. Honour therefore them, to whom, according to the diverſity of ſtation eſtabliſhed by providence, honour is due. Be obedient to them who have a right to command you: but both honour and obey, in a manner conſiſtent with the excellency of your nature, generouſly and nobly, not with meanneſs and abject ſervility; and deem it no misfortune you have not a ſhare in that ſupremacy and honour. Seek only to embelliſh your ſoul with knowledge and virtue, to maintain your moral freedom, to renew yourſelves after the image of God, and to become fitted for a bleſſed immortality; thus, in whatever ſtation you are placed, you will be great and happy, both in the preſent and in the better world.

And you, who have power and authority in your hands, you who, by the ſtation you fill in human ſociety, or by the other advantages that adorn you, are ſo far exalted above your brethren, never forget that thoſe who are beneath you poſſeſs what principally ennobles man, what gives him his greateſt

worth, in common with you; that their nature is as excellent as yours; that they have the ſame deſtination with you; and that they are moſtly adventitious and tranſitory things by which you are diſtinguiſhed from them. Beware then of conſidering them as if they were beings of an inferior order; and conſtantly reflect, that nothing, abſolutely nothing, can make a man mean and contemptible but folly and vice. Shew, much rather, even to the loweſt among mankind, the eſteem and affection that is their due as rational and immortal creatures, as children of our univerſal Father in heaven, as coheirs of your future glory; the regard and love which God and his ſon Jeſus have ſhewn to them, and everlaſtingly will ſhew.

And all you, who bear the name of chriſtians, confeſs likewiſe here the excellency of the gift with which God has favoured you in the chriſtian revelation. To this revelation you are chiefly indebted for the knowledge you have of the dignity of your ſoul, and its high vocation. To this revelation you are indebted for knowing the means whereby you may maintain this nobleneſs of your ſoul, and reach the ends of its formation. This divine revelation has even guided you, chriſtian philoſophers, on the way of truth, has removed the grand impediments that might have ſtopped your progreſs on it, and given you both light and force to walk with firmer ſtep and to come nearer to the mark of perſpicuity and certainty.

O chriſ-

O chriſtians, revere the heavenly doctrine to which you are ſo much beholden. Beware how you miſuſe this gracious boon, or apply it only to the adorning of your minds. Let the light, with which it enlightens you, ſtrike into your hearts, ſo as to cheer and fertilize them to generous ſentiments. Let it not only guide your perceptions and judgments, but let it direct your affections and regulate your conduct. Think and act at all times ſo as becomes creatures whoſe origin is ſo illuſtrious, whoſe faculties are ſo great, whoſe deſtination is ſo glorious. And whenever temptations flatter, whenever the men of the world would ſeduce you to take part in their follies and exceſſes, let theſe thoughts be preſent to your mind: — What! ſhall I debaſe my rational and immortal ſoul? Shall I prefer groſs and animal gratifications to the pure and generous pleaſures and occupations of the mind? Shall I by fooliſh, ſenſual purſuits plunge from the eminence on which I ſtand, as the image of the deity, into the mirey pool of wallowing beaſts? Shall I ſurrender and diſqualify myſelf for the happineſs to which I am invited in the world to come, that I may enjoy a few fleeting ſatisfactions and fallacious delights of the preſent, or that I may gratify particular perſons, and purchaſe their favour at the expenſe of my innocence and peace? No, I will endeavour to maintain the poſt which my creator has aſſigned me, and worthily to employ the talents he has intruſted to my care, that he may intruſt me as a faithful ſer-

vant with more hereafter, and requite the uſe he approves of my faculties and advantages with higher advantages and greater powers. To know him, to commune with him, to regulate my heart and my life by his will, to ſtrengthen and cheriſh in my ſoul each beneficent, each friendly propenſity, to become conſtantly wiſer and better, and even now to purſue a heavenly courſe, ſhall be my chief concern, my glory and my joy. This ſhall ſupply the want or the loſs of all earthly diſtinctions, tranſport me beyond time and the grave, and lay a firm foundation for my everlaſting perfection and happineſs. And may this, my friends, be the purpoſe and endeavour of us all; may this be our future portion!

SERMON XX.

The Value of Man's Life-time upon Earth.

GOD, before whom worlds infinite revolve their mazy dance like atoms in the ſunbeam, who alone poſſeſſeſt immortality, and liveſt from everlaſting to everlaſting, how abſolutely nothing are all mankind before thee, the Eternal and Infinite! We are of yeſterday, and perhaps to-morrow ſhall be no more! Short and uncertain are our days on earth; they paſs away like a ſhadow! Yet under thy controul and according to thy appointment! Yet abundant in conſequences for all future times, for all the ages of eternity! Yes, the number of our months is with thee, thou haſt appointed us a bound that we cannot paſs. Daily, hourly, we are drawing nearer to it; and how ſoon ſhall we not attain it! But glorious is the prize that ſhines before us at the end of our courſe, the prize for which thou haſt commanded us to contend: it is a ſuperior perfection, a purer felicity than this earthly life can afford us! Yes, thou haſt called us, who are

duſt and aſhes, to immortality; thou haſt made us capable of an everlaſting duration, of an ever-increaſing felicity. And how important is thus our ſhort life-time on earth! How important every day, every hour of it! Here it is our buſineſs to prepare and form ourſelves for that ſuperior, better life. Here we are to accumulate treaſures, treaſures of wiſdom and virtue, for futurity. Oh might we never loſe ſight of our high deſtination! Might we conſtantly be coming nearer it every year, every day! May particularly the year we have entered upon to-day, be bleſſed in this reſpect, and be diſtinguiſhed from all the paſt years of our life by a zealous, unabated progreſs towards the mark of our high calling! Yes, to thee the lord and father of our life, may this gift of thy bounty be conſecrated, to the faithful accompliſhment of thy will and the duties of our ſuperior celeſtial vocation! Oh teach us then its importance, teach us thoroughly to underſtand and to feel the value of the time, whether longer or ſhorter, thou haſt appointed each of us for his terreſtrial abode, as the period of his diſcipline and probation; and grant that we may ever employ it more faithfully, improve it more diligently, and thus ever ſtrengthen farther our hope of a bleſſed immortality. Yes, let us continue and complete this new period of our lives with the ſame good, pious ſentiments and diſpoſitions with which we have begun it. Bleſs to that end our reflections on theſe important ſubjects, and let them have a powerful,

powerful, laſting influence on the whole of our future conduct till this tempeſtuous night be paſt, and the eternal morrow dawn. We aſk it of thee in the name of Jeſus Chriſt our lord, addreſſing thee further, with filial confidence, in his words: Our father, &c.

PSALM CXLIV. 4.

Man is like a thing of nought: his time paſſeth away like a ſhadow.

NOTHING is by many perſons more thoughtleſsly trifled away than their time. They hold nothing to be more inſignificant than an hour, a day, a week. Therefore as they have always time enough for everything, they put everything off from one time to another, and take no account of its loſs. Therefore it is that time ſeems, by their feelings, ſo tedious in its progreſs, hangs often ſo heavy on their hands, as to make them anxiouſly long for each ſucceſſive change or diviſion of it. Therefore it is, that they are ſo ſedulouſly attentive to the means of ſhortening their time, and ſo eager to ſeize on anything that promiſes them this favour. Therefore every diſſipation, every company, every amuſement, every play or farce, every new ſcene, be it never ſo terrifying or alarming, finds ſuch a hearty welcome. — Would one not imagine that perſons who

who think in this manner were ſure of their lives for hundreds or thouſands of years to come, and that the proſpect of this long continuance filled them with perturbation and horror? And yet theſe are beings of yeſterday, and may perhaps ſee nothing of to-morrow! Beings, whoſe time flits away like a ſhadow! Beings, whoſe longeſt life is as ſhort as it is precarious, and who even themſelves but too frequently complain of the brevity and uncertainty of it! Whence then this direct contrariety with themſelves? How can one and the ſame ſubject have ſuch oppoſite qualities, and occaſion ſuch oppoſite judgments? Becauſe it is not always ſeen in the ſame point of view, not always meaſured by the ſame ſtandard; becauſe it is not always judged of by what it is in the abſtract, but according to the preſent feelings we have of it, and the uſe to which we apply it. Is the time ſtill future, do whole months and years ſtill intervene; its tardy approach makes the man of the world impatient: is it preſent, and he knows not well how to employ it; the weight of it is a burden: is it paſt, has it ſlipped from him unuſed and unenjoyed; he laments the ſhortneſs and velocity of it. Mere miſtakes, which he alone avoids, who knows how to eſtimate the value of time, and conſtantly to make a proper uſe of it. To him the time that is allotted him on earth is of the utmoſt importance, as he underſtands its nature and deſtination, and in the application of it has both of them conſtantly in view. And this, my dear friends,

friends, it ſhould be to us, to us who have again left behind us another large ſection of it, and are come nearer its end by one whole year! To the furtherance of this purpoſe let us firſt conſider the great value or the vaſt importance of time, in ſo far as it limits our ſojourn and our deſtination on earth; and then draw from the reſult a few rules for the prudent regulation of our behaviour in regard to it.

The time of our life upon earth is important, my pious hearers, it is of great value, as it is ſhort and of extremely uncertain duration. He would not need to be particularly chary of his time, and might be ſomewhat prodigal of it, who ſhould have ſome thouſands of years to live and was ſure of his life! But by no means he who can ſcarcely count upon ſo many days, and not upon one with any certitude! Yes, ſhort is the longeſt life of man; and yet very few of the ſpecies attain to the utmoſt limits of it. Numbers are obliged to quit the courſe, when they have but juſt entered upon it; have hardly advanced a few ſteps, ere they know anything either of its uſe or deſtination, ere they have taſted its pleaſures or experienced its troubles. And how many others are ſnatched away by death, before they have left the half of it behind, and have ſuddenly reached the term which they thought at ſo great a diſtance! And what are even ſeventy or eighty years to ſuch as have paſſed them? To a being that pants after immortality, and feels poſſeſſed of inexhauſtible powers and inſatiable deſires, are they

they anything more than a tranſient morning's dream? And who of us all can tell whether he ſhall dream out this dream, or whether he ſhall not much ſooner awake in another ſcene of things? Who of us knows whether the preſent year may not be the laſt, whether the preſent day may not be the laſt to him? As certainly as we are all here at preſent alive, ſo certainly will more than one of us be no longer on the earth by the end of the preſent year. And this may be the portion of the youngeſt, the healthieſt, the ſtrongeſt, as well as of the moſt aged and infirm; it may attack any one of us, however vivid the ſenſe of his vital powers may be at preſent! And ſhould not the time, which is ſo ſhort and uncertain, be of great value to us? Can we afford to ſquander any of it away? Can we allow any of it to run to waſte? Did the youth conſider, that even in the ſpring tide of his life, he may become a prey to death; that he may bloſſom here, but not bear fruit; did the man reflect that he may not reach the pinnacle of extreme old age; that he may be thrown into the grave in the midſt of his courſe: how very differently would both the one and the other apply and enjoy their appinted time! How carefully would the former cheriſh and guard, in the bloom of his life, that innocence that is to be the ground of his felicity in a better world; and how zealouſly would the other ſtrive to correſpond with his vocation! But does either the one or the other know the contrary of this, with any aſſurance?

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Can the former reckon with certainty on ſeeing the ſummer, can the latter on ſeeing the autumn of his life? And ſhould not both of them therefore ſo paſs the few precarious years they have to live, as though each of them were to be the laſt?

The time of our life on earth is farther important, my pious hearers, it is of great value, as it flits away with incredible ſpeed. The time of man, ſays our text, paſſeth away like a ſhadow. Place thyſelf upon the margin of a rapid torrent; obſerve with what inceſſant force one drop purſues another, one wave drives on another, how every moment the ſurface of the ſtream is changed, how ſoon and how far what thou ſaweſt but now is rolled away beyond thy ſight, and how it devolves its accumulated waters to the larger river, and afterwards, with the river itſelf, is abſorbed in the ocean; then wilt thou have a ſimilitude of the velocity with which thy hours, thy days, thy years, flow on. Yes, everything as it were adds fleetneſs to time! What a conſiderable portion of it are we robbed of by ſleep, the brother of death! How cloſe together, how blended, are commonly the moment of being awake and the firſt inſtant of ſleep! How imperceptible, how totally effaced from our remembrance, how completely annihilated is the interval between them! And then the various and ſucceſſive affairs of life, which admit of no delay, conſtantly purſuing and preſſing on each other; the daily, the hourly revolutions and viciſſitudes of all about us; our own reſtleſs endeavours

deavours after ſome object, after greater activity and happineſs, after new pleaſures and proſpects; the multitude and variety of views, of projects, of concerns, of expectations, of obſtacles, of impulſes, of joys and ſorrows, which are continually meeting, purſuing, overtaking, or impeding us on the path of life; how greatly muſt all theſe accelerate the race of time! Yes, rapid, inconceivably rapid, is its current! Ere we have looked about us, it is gone; ere we have made up our minds, the opportunity for doing or enjoying good is paſt. Nothing can detain its flight, nothing abate the rapidity of its courſe. Tedious as it may frequently ſeem in reference to our wiſhes and expectations, ſo quickly is it elapſed when once arrived; and he who knows not how to prize its worth, nor apprehends its conſequence, who makes no account of hours and moments as well as of days and years, will ſuffer the greater part of it to flow on without profit or enjoyment.

The time of our life on earth is thirdly of conſequence, my pious hearers, it is of great value, as it is irrevocable. Once paſt, it is gone for ever. Once elapſed, unuſed and unenjoyed, it is for ever loſt. No regrets, no tears, no lamentations, can recall it from the gulph of the paſt. Where is the year we completed yeſterday; where are the hours we have already paſſed to-day? Can we live or enjoy either the one or the other again? O young man, where is the period of thy guiltleſs child-

hood?

hood? Where are the days of thy blooming youth, o thou that art arrived at manhood? Where is the whole of thy life-time, thy puerile, thy juvenile, thy manly, thy advanced age, o thou that art full of years, who art trembling on the verge of the grave? Is not the childhood of the youth, the youth of the man, the whole life-time of the aged, for ever elapſed, irrevocably vaniſhed away? Which of you all can ſet out upon his courſe afreſh, or only tread one pace of it again? Thou wiſheſt in vain, o thou who haſt trifled and ſquandered away thy youth, or ſpent thy beſt years in the ſervice of folly and vice, in vain doſt thou wiſh their return; in vain doſt thou repine at the inconceivable velocity with which they eſcaped thee; in vain doſt thou deplore thy levity, thy heedleſſneſs, and the miſuſe thou haſt made of the faireſt ſeaſon, the beſt years of thy life! Their loſs is irretrievable; the ceaſeleſs torrent of time has carried them away, and nothing can repair the damage thou haſt thus brought on thyſelf. The time that is ſtill before thee, thou mayeſt more wiſely and better employ, and thereby become happier; but the hours, the days, the years that are once behind thee, are no more in thy power, and the pernicious effects of the unemployment or abuſe of them can never be entirely done away. And ſhould not the time, my dear friends, that is ſo irrecoverable, the loſs of which is ſo irreparable, be of great importance, of great value in our eyes?

We ought ſurely to be as cautious and œconomical as poſſible in the management of what we may ſo eaſily neglect and loſe, but which cannot with impunity be neglected and loſt.

The time of our life on earth is fourthly important, my pious hearers, it has a great value, ſince it is granted us for the purpoſe of executing a number of weighty and difficult matters. Oh how much have we all to do in this ſhort ſpace of life, if we would apply it to the ends for which it is given, if we would be and become here what we are called to be and to become! To ſatisfy our animal wants, to procure us food and raiment, to ſupport our terreſtrial life, to purſue ſome art or trade; to provide for the maintenance of our family, to promote the welfare of ſociety and to perform a particular part in it: this is not all, this is not the chief of what we have here to attempt and to achieve! To theſe purpoſes we have no need of all thoſe great capacities and powers which we have received of the creator, of all the means to higher perfection and happineſs of which he has made us ſuſceptible! No, here we are to become intelligent, wiſe, virtuous creatures; here we are to controul our ſenſuality, to govern ourſelves, to think and live by ſettled principles on a determinate plan; here we are to love God and our brethren, to direct all our appetites and affections to the beſt and worthieſt objects, to ſeek our ſatisfaction in juſtice and humanity, to refine and dig-

nify our taſte, to ſtudy to employ all our capacities and powers in the beſt manner, and by theſe means to prepare ourſelves for the employments and pleaſures of a ſuperior life. And are theſe truly things that are ſo quickly, ſo eaſily effected? Is this truly the work of a few hours or days? Does it not require many and reiterated attempts, continued practice, inceſſant application? Have we not many both inward and outward impediments and difficulties to encounter by the way? — Can we ever in all theſe particulars become ſo expert, ſo complete, that we cannot ſtill become more apt and more perfect? Are we not capable of a conſtantly progreſſive, of an unbounded perfection? And ſhould not the time in which we have all this to do, and which is ſo ſhort and precarious, be important, be precious in our ſight? Certainly the man who degrades himſelf in his ſentiments to a level with the beaſts of the field, and expects after death to ſhare their fate, may conſider the time of his life on earth as inſignificant, and be indifferent to the uſe of it! But to him who reflects on the true ends of his creation, who apprehends the dignity of the man and the chriſtian, who conſiders and feels his immortality, his alliance with ſuperior beings and with the deity himſelf, to him every day, every hour of his earthly exiſtence, muſt and will be highly important. To turn it to the beſt account muſt and will be at once both his duty and his delight.

A fifth circumſtance, which renders the time of our life on earth of much importance, and gives it a great value, is this: however ſhort, however uncertain, however irrevocable time is, yet, in every greater or ſmaller diviſion of it, we may do much good or much harm, may be very ſerviceable or very prejudicial. To this neither a whole lifetime, nor whole years, nor months, are requiſite. Every day may occaſion to ourſelves and to others whole ages of happineſs or miſery. Every hour may be the parent of a thouſand and a thouſand gloomy or pleaſant, cheerful or ſorrowful, hours and days. They all are concatenated together, are all interwoven with each other, and all fruitful in great and important effects. Haſt thou laviſhed away and miſemployed one hour, one day, one month, one year of thy life; thou haſt not only loſt this time, and loſt it for ever, but its loſs and its miſuſe has the moſt baneful influence on all thy future hours and days and months and years. On the other hand, haſt thou well employed the preſent time, whether long or ſhort; haſt thou ſown good ſeed in it, and exerciſed thyſelf in uſeful matters; then wilt thou reap an increaſe of a thouſand fold in the times to come. And how much good, or how much evil, how much of what is generally uſeful or generally prejudicial may we think, will, ſpeak, plan, or execute, in one ſingle day, in one ſingle hour! How often is a day, or an hour, a ſource of never-failing joy, or of unremitting ſorrow,

row, to ourſelves and others! How often is the foundation laid of a thouſand agreeable or diſagreeable ſenſations, of a thouſand laudable or opprobrious actions! How often does a day, or an hour, pacify or diſturb, embitter or ſweeten the whole ſucceeding life to ourſelves or others! How often ſtrengthen the weak, or render him weaker ſtill; inſtruct or confuſe the ignorant; guide the innocent aright, or ſeduce him aſtray into forbidden ground; comfort the ſufferer, or multiply his ſorrows; amend the wicked, or corrupt him more; rejoice or afflict the good! How much is frequently effected by one thought, one word, one opinion, one action, one miſtake, or one omiſſion; how far do its effects extend! And if one hour, one day may be ſo important to ourſelves and to others, how important muſt whole months, whole years, how important muſt our whole life-time be! What an oppreſſive load of bad, of criminal attempts and actions, muſt the vicious be heaping upon themſelves during the whole courſe of it! And how rich a treaſure of good, godly ſentiments and actions, of actions that God will requite, may the virtuous be at the ſame time collecting together! And ſhould not the time, wherein we may do this or the other, and one of them we ſhall certainly do, be of the utmoſt importance to us?

Yes, the time of our life on earth is important; it is of great value: ſince the uſe or neglect of it has an influence on all our future deſtinies; their

conſequences accompany us into the grave, and out of the grave again into the regions of eternity. The preſent, my chriſtian brother, is the ſeaſon of ſowing. If thou omit carefully to cultivate the field intruſted to thee, if thou ſow it not with good grain, or ſow it ſparingly, and neglect to guard and tend it as it ſprings up, grows and fills: thou canſt not hope to reap hereafter; the crop will fail thee; thou wilt ſuffer want and miſery; or thou wilt reap but ſparingly; thou wilt be reduced to eat the bitter and corrupt fruit of thy evil deeds. This is the time of exerciſe and diſcipline. Here thou art to allow thyſelf to be educated, formed, improved: here thou art to employ thy faculties and powers, to exert them as becomes a rational, an immortal creature, to love and to prize truth and virtue above all things, to rejoice in God, to obey him cheerfully, and to learn contentment and happineſs in the accompliſhment of his will. Doſt thou not make this thy ſtudy, rejecteſt thou the diſcipline and the inſtruction of thy father in heaven; doſt thou refuſe to exerciſe thyſelf in what is right and good: then wilt thou proceed, ignorant, unimproved, inexpert, from the ſchool of this life, into thy ſuperior appointment: then, at the time of retribution, thou haſt nothing to expect in return for thy induſtry and fidelity; then muſt thou ſuffer the penalty due to thy untractableneſs and thy diſobedience; then muſt thou, if thou wouldſt even there be happy, then muſt thou become ſo

by

by other means, by a much harſher, much ſeverer diſcipline. Here is the time for preparation: here muſt thou learn to love, to uſe, to enjoy, at leaſt as a novice, the occupations, the pleaſures, the advantages of the future life, and give a nobler direction to thy taſte and inclinations, ſuch as befits that ſuperior ſtate. Doſt thou omit ſo to do; doſt thou perſiſt in retaining thy animal, thy earthly diſpoſitions: then muſt thy delights, thy pleaſures, thy happineſs, ultimately terminate with the preſent life; then art thou not ſuſceptible of the purer delights, the nobler pleaſures, the exalted bliſs, which, at the time of fruition, await all thoſe who have prepared and fitted themſelves for them. But happy, eternally happy for them, who have actually done and continue to do ſo! They may promiſe themſelves the moſt luxuriant harveſt from what they have ſown, the moſt glorious fruits from the docility with which they have allowed themſelves to be educated, and the moſt bliſsful enjoyment from their diligent preparation. And ſhould not the time, which thus determines all our future deſtinies, which procures us either happineſs or miſery, reward or puniſhment, in the other world; ſhould not this time be important, ſhould it not be of ineſtimable value to us?

Is this however true, my dear friends; is the time of our life on earth ſo ſhort and precarious; flits it ſo rapidly away; is it ſo irrecoverable; is it allotted to us for the performance of ſo many

weighty and difficult matters; may we in every, even the ſmalleſt portion of it, do ſo much good or ſo much evil, ſo many generally uſeful or generally hurtful actions, and is the application of it ſo influential on our future fortunes: oh then conſider and uſe this time agreeably to its value and the purpoſes for which it is granted! It may be huſbanded; but it may likewiſe be laviſhed away: it may be comparatively prolonged; but it may likewiſe be abridged: it may leave veſtiges of its paſſage behind, which may gladden ourſelves and others for ever; it may likewiſe for ever be totally loſt to us and to them. The former is the aim and the happineſs of the wiſe: this the behaviour and the puniſhment of fools. Oh let that be your aim, your moſt zealous, your inceſſant aim, my dear friends! Treaſure the time, the ſhort, the uncertain, the fleeting, the irrevocable, the important time you have here to live; prize each year of it, each day, every hour. Be not prodigal, be œconomical of your time, of which you may have ſo little left, and of the application whereof you muſt one day give an account. Let not your time paſs unemployed, unimproved away. Let it not elapſe in idleneſs or vice. Beware of trifling or idling away the hours, the days, that are ſo great and important in their value, and irreparable in their loſs. Seize, fructify every moment that is ſtill in your power; mark it with ſome reflection, with ſome action not unworthy of a man; and thereby

give

give a certain fixedneſs and ſtability to what is ſo evaneſcent and unſteady. Conceive and effect as much good as ever you can; and though you cannot thus ſtop the rapid flight of time, yet make it memorable to you, and the recollection of it a fountain of joy. — Procraſtinate nothing; ſince time is uncertain, it is not in your power. Do and enjoy the good to-day, which to-day you are allowed to do and to enjoy; ſince you know not whether you will have time and ability and opportunity for it to-morrow. Conſider, deem, treat the preſent, conſtantly as it is connected with the future. Frequently reflect, that ſhortly time will be no more to you; the time for practice and preparation: and the more you have ſtill to do, in a view to your improvement, haſten ſo much the more to finiſh this important buſineſs. The farther the day of your earthly life is already ſpent, ſo much the more ſeduloufly apply every remaining hour or moment of it to the performance of the taſk committed to you, that you may not be unprepared when the night comes on wherein no man can work. And then, but only then, though your time paſs away like a ſhadow, it is not loſt; it has been that to you which it was appointed to be, and has procured you what it was deſigned to procure you; and to the time well employed enſues eternity, wherein we ſhall not lament the faithful uſe of it, wherein it will inceſſantly rejoice us!

And

And may this, my dear friends, be the lot of you all; thus important and bleſſed may time be to you! It is certainly the beſt wiſh, at the commencement of this new ſection of time, I can give you, in whoſe welfare I am ſo deeply concerned; a wiſh in which my heart takes the warmeſt intereſt. — — Long and bleſſed be your days, my deareſt companions and hearers! May cheerful confidence and pious joy be their conſtant attendants; may hope and reliance on God, and the proſpect of a better life, ſhed light and felicity upon them! Brightened by wiſdom and virtue, may they ſerenely glide away; free from all ſelf-accuſing ſorrows, free from reproaching and anxious cares! May no day of your lives paſs by without profit and enjoyment; may none of them cauſe you confuſion and ſhame in the ſolemn hour of death! None witneſs againſt you at the day of judgment! But may each of them be marked by uſeful employments, by ſome laudable action, by grateful enjoyment of the bounties of heaven, each be fruitful in bleſſed effects for the future life! Yes, though ſhort and fleeting your days on earth, yet rich may they be in the bleſſings of God, in the works of righteouſneſs, in the works of beneficence and love, and the memorial of them be as joyful to yourſelves as to your contemporaries, your children and your deſcendants! And when at length the laſt of the days of your life ſhall arrive,

rive, when you are ſummoned to exchange time for eternity, then may the peace of God conſole and gladden your hearts, then may you take up the words of the triumphant apoſtle: "I have fought the good fight; I have finiſhed my courſe. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous judge, ſhall give me!" I have ſtood firm to God and to virtue, and ſhall receive the prize from my judge and my Father, which he will give to all who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for praiſe, for glory and immortality! — Yes, teach us, o God, our moſt merciful Father, ſo teach us to think and to live, that we may paſs through the grave and gate of death, into the bliſs of the better, the eternal life!

New-year's day, 1783.

SERMON XXI.

The Value, or the Importance of one Year.

GOD, who liveſt and reigneſt and operateſt from everlaſting to everlaſting, who ordereſt and ruleſt all times and worlds according to thy good pleaſure, and, far exalted above all viciſſitudes and accidents, ever remaineſt what thou art and whoſe years ſhall have no end; we, whoſe days are like a ſhadow, whoſe lives are as nothing before thee, we are here aſſembled in thy preſence to adore thee, the Eternal, the Infinite, and to conſecrate to thee, to whom our time and all that we are and have peculiarly belong, the firſtlings of the year. May the tribute of our reverence and our ſubmiſſion be acceptable in thy ſight? — With grateful awe we approach thy throne, o God, and the praiſe of thy goodneſs ſhall be our firſt employment this day and for ever! What a ſeries of precious bounties and bleſſings, ſpiritual and temporal, preſent themſelves to our mind when we review the year that is paſt, and to whom but to thee

and

and thy unmerited favour have we to render thanks for all! Life, health, ſtrength; food, raiment; progreſs and bleſſing in our affairs; light and inſtruction; comfort and hope; preſervation from ſin and from miſery; ability to goodneſs; private and public welfare; ſatisfactions of the preſent and of the future life: whence do they all proceed; whence but from thee, o ſacred ſource of everflowing love, and thy unmeaſured goodneſs! All are gifts and graces of thy bounty. Every day, every hour of the concluded year teſtifies of thy kindneſs and affection towards us. Thy compaſſions are new every morning and thy faithfulneſs is very great. — To thee, Benign Creator, to thee belong glory and honour; thee ſhould all thy creatures praiſe, for thou haſt made them all, thy mercy is over all thy works, and thou never ceaſeſt to bleſs us and to do us good! — Oh that every day, every hour of the elapſed year could likewiſe teſtify of our gratitude, of our love and our obedience to thee, oh that it might not riſe up againſt us hereafter and convict us of the abuſe of thy bounty! Lord, thou art righteous, love is eſſential to thy nature; but to us belongs confuſion of face! In ſhame and trouble we lament that we have no better anſwered our obligations; we feel the burden, the heavy oppreſſive burden of ſins and guilt which a whole year has accumulated on us, thy ſinful people! Ah how many neglected duties, how many omitted acts of goodneſs, how many inordinate

inordinate luſts and evil deeds have we to bewail in thy preſence! How great has been the danger of many, perhaps of moſt of us, of being overtaken by death and eternity, ere they were ready, and had rendered themſelves fit for paſſing into a better life! O God ſhew thy mercy upon us! Cleanſe our hearts, and take not thy holy ſpirit from us. After thy great mercy do away our offences, and let them, like the year we have paſſed, be immerſed in the gulf of oblivion. — And this new year, o God, that thy forbearance has allowed us to begin this day, ah let it not increaſe our guilt, but promote our perfection and our happineſs; let it be more fruitful in truly chriſtian ſentiments and actions than the years of our lives have hitherto been. Grant that we may never forget our ſuperior appointment, conſtantly connect the preſent with the future, and principally ſeek after that which is above, where Chriſt our ſaviour is. Teach us ever to remember that as men we muſt die, and that the ſpirit which dwells in us is immortal, that we may thus become wiſe and capable of a bleſſed immortality, through Jeſus Chriſt, our lord, in whoſe name and words we ſum up all our petitions, ſaying: Our father, &c.

JOHN IX. 4.

I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

TO creatures whoſe life is of ſhort duration; who can truly enjoy ſcarce the half of their life, or uſe it in the beſt method for advancing their real perfection and happineſs; and who withal are never ſure of the continuance of this life: to ſuch creatures a year muſt abſolutely be a conſiderable portion of time; the loſs or the gain of a year muſt be a great loſs or gain to them! Are theſe creatures however immortal; does their preſent life touch on the future; is the one only a conſequence and continuation of the other; will their future life be happy or unhappy according to the degree in which they have well or ill employed the preſent: then a year muſt be ſtill more important to them, the loſs or the gain of a year muſt be ſtill much greater to them.

But are not we ſuch creatures, my devout audience? Is not this the caſe with our life? It laſts ſeventy, and if it run high it laſts eighty years. Very few reach this extremity. But even they who attain to it can ſcarcely be ſaid to rejoice in their life for above twenty or thirty years, or enjoy it with conſciouſneſs and the exertion of their nobleſt mental

mental faculties. The reſt of it we paſs in the irrational ſtate of infancy, or in ſleep, in infirmities and pain, in low and animal gratifications, in doing nothing, or in grief and trouble. All this while we know, that after death we have another life to expect, and that our preſent conduct will fix and determine our future lot. How important then muſt a year be to us! How much muſt depend on the good or bad application of it! And how alert ought this conſideration to make us in the diſcharge of our duties!

Our Saviour, my friends, who always goes before us with his example, may likewiſe here be our pattern. He ſaw with conviction the importance of time, and each greater or ſmaller diviſion of it; thence he was ſo buſy and indefatigable in doing that which was committed to him to do on earth; therefore he ſays in our text, "I muſt work the works of him that ſent me while it is day;" while I have time and means and opportunity for it; "the night cometh," times of adverſity come, unfavourable circumſtances, ſickneſs and death, "when no man can work," when no man can tranſact his affairs. How wiſe, how noble, are theſe ſentiments of our Lord! Oh that they might be alſo our ſentiments, my pious hearers! My this day's diſcourſe is intended, under the divine bleſſing, to awaken or to confirm them in you. I ſhall therefore to this end lay before you the importance of a year; and I

wiſh

wiſh from my heart, that theſe conſiderations may incite us all to make the beſt and worthieſt uſe of the year we have entered upon to-day.

In ſpeaking of the importance and the great value of a year, my pious hearers, we of courſe preſuppoſe, that it was not chance but a wiſe creator that placed us on this globe of the earth; that it is not a matter of indifference, how we behave ourſelves upon it, how we employ our capacities, our abilities, our time and our poſſeſſions; that God has delivered to each of us, as well as to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, a certain work to finiſh; or that we are ordained to certain ends and that theſe ends are important. We preſuppoſe, that we are not here merely for ſupporting our terreſtrial life, and ſupplying our animal wants; that we ſhould eat, drink, ſleep, propagate our ſpecies and procure ourſelves a number of ſenſual pleaſures, and by the proſecution of the affairs of our calling obtain the means thereto; but that we are principally deſigned to promote the perfection of our ſpirit, by reflection and practice to become wiſe and virtuous and by wiſdom and virtue to be truly uſeful to others, to learn to elevate ourſelves to the knowledge of God, to love and to obey him, and thus by degrees to render ourſelves qualified and fitted for a higher and more perfect ſtate in another life.

If we hold this to be our deſtination; if we conſider our preſent life as reaſon and religion perſuade us to conſider it, and are deſirous of learning to

underſtand the importance of a year: we ſhould weigh, how much good or harm we may do in one year, and how much we may thereby promote or impede our perfection and happineſs; how many important conſequences and how infinite in extent proceed from the good and the harm we do in one year, as well in reference to ourſelves as to others; how different the future years may be in many reſpects from the preſent; and how uncertain it is, whether this may not be the laſt year of our lives.

Let us conſider theſe four particulars ſomewhat circumſtantially. They will furniſh us with ſo many cogent reaſons for labouring in the work for which God has placed us on this terreſtrial globe, while it is day, that the night may not overtake us before it be finiſhed.

We may in one year do much good or harm, and thereby very much promote or impede our perfection and happineſs; and this is the firſt cauſe why we attribute ſo much importance to a year, or eſteem it ſuch a conſiderable part of our lives. How ſurprizingly great, how far above the reach of numbers, is the ſum total of thoughts and ideas that ariſe in the mind in the courſe of one ſingle year! Divide the year into days, the days into hours, the hours into minutes and ſeconds; and, when you have reckoned up the reſults together, ſtill it will not nearly amount to the ſum of your thoughts! We all think inceſſantly, whether we wake or ſleep,

labour or reſt; our thoughts ſucceed each other with a velocity that is ſcarcely to be conceived, and but ſeldom are they totally indifferent. How much good or harm then muſt a man think in one year! And how much often depends on one ſingle thought! How much therefore muſt depend on the thouſands, the hundred thouſands, the millions of thoughts that ariſe in us in a whole year!

How far muſt it forward a man in wiſdom and virtue, how much contribute to his improvement and perfection, if he attend to all the thoughts of which he is conſcious from one end of the year to the other; if he try them by the rules of truth and juſtice, frequently and ingenuouſly direct them to the worthieſt and beſt objects, to God, to his perfections and bounties, to Jeſus Chriſt and his example, to the welfare of his fellow-creatures and the means of promoting it, to his own deportment, to his preſent and future vocation; and endeavour to give them the degree of perſpicuity, of certainty and vivacity, which he may by frequent and pertinacious reflection! What a rich ſtore of uſeful ideas and various knowledge may he thus lay up for the future! What fruitful ſeed may he thus ſow in his mind of innumerable other good thoughts, opinions, determinations and actions!

How much on the other hand muſt a man loſe, how greatly muſt he obſtruct his perfection and happineſs, if he allow his thoughts to ramble about as it were in his mind, for a whole year long, without

order and controul; if he adopt every impreſſion from without, or admit every idea his imagination preſents, or that caſually ſprings up in his mind, without conſideration, without examination, without ſelection, and allow himſelf to be governed by it; if he purpoſely call off his thoughts from ſerious and important ſubjects, relating to God and religion and eternity; if he often intentionally direct them to bad, or even almoſt always to worthleſs, indifferent, terreſtrial objects; and at the ſame time perſuade himſelf, that it would be an unneceſſary conſtraint, or an over-ſtrained conſcientiouſneſs, to make ſuch a work about mere thoughts, or to judge ſo ſeverely of their good and bad quality! How very much muſt the light of his underſtanding be darkened, and the ſtrength of his mind enfeebled! How much nouriſhment muſt every depraved appetite within him thus acquire! How unfit muſt he become for withſtanding temptations and allurements to ſin! How often muſt irregular, violent cupidities ariſe from his refractory thoughts, and unlawful actions proceed again from theſe; and how much ſeed is he ſowing in his mind, for unjuſt judgments, criminal luſts and actions to ſpring from in future, which will thrive in concealment, and at laſt bring forth the fruits of corruption!

Proceed now, my friends, from the thoughts to the words, which we utter during the courſe of a year. How prodigious too is their amount! How much good or evil may we ſpeak in one year! how much may we thus benefit or injure ourſelves and

and others! How ſalutary, how precious is frequently but one good word ſpoken in ſeaſon! What diſorder, what miſchief, on the contrary, may a bad word produce, which we are prompted to utter by envy, or hatred, or malice, or imprudence, or weakneſs! To what a vaſt ſum then muſt the total of all the ſpeeches amount which proceed from our mouth in a year! Repreſent to yourſelves a man, who keeps his tongue as it were with a bridle through all that period, ſpeaking conſtantly with conſideration and to good purpoſe; who ſeizes all proper occaſions, one while to inform the ignorant or erroneous, whether in ſpiritual or in ſecular affairs, at another to give affectionate ſuggeſtions and cautions to one addicted to bad habits and failings; now to ſpeak conſolation to ſome mourner, then encouragement to the dejected; now to take up the cauſe of the innocent, the cauſe of the needy, the widow and the orphan, then to defend the cauſe of religion and virtue; now to impart amicably to others his ſound ſkill in the buſineſſes and concerns of this life, then his clear knowledge of the doctrines and duties of chriſtianity; now to exhilarate the company by inoffenſive, harmleſs, playful humour, and then to turn their attention to more ſerious and important topics; figure to yourſelves ſuch a man, I ſay, and then judge how much good he may perform by ſpeaking in the courſe of one year! How many miſchiefs he may prevent! From how many

crimes and errors preſerve his brethren! How many troubles alleviate to them! How many rational, wiſe, virtuous, pious, generally uſeful thoughts, ſentiments, reſolutions, actions, thereby encourage or excite in others, and by theſe again in other men!

Repreſent to yourſelves on the other hand a man, who during the ſame ſpace of time gives free ſcope to his tongue, paying little regard to anything he ſays, unleſs it relate immediately to himſelf; who accounts it ſomething of a ſhame to be heard talking on important, ſerious, and even on religious ſubjects; who thinks that the whole buſineſs of his ſocial converſations is to paſs away the time, or to ſhew his wit, and gives himſelf no concern at all about profiting others by a right application of the gift of ſpeech; or perhaps even dares to ſport with the moſt ſacred and awful things, to make a mock at ſin and vice, to vindicate them and to recommend them, to amuſe or ſcandalize the company by calumnies, by ſlanders, by harſh and ſarcaſtical cenſures on other perſons, by lyes, by indecent ambiguities, by foul diſcourſe: how much harm may ſuch an one perpetrate in one ſingle year by his ſpeech! How much ſuſpicion, diſunion, diſcord, coolneſs, ſtrife, animoſity, may he ſtir up! How many bad impreſſions will he probably make on the innocent but young and unguarded heart! How many good impreſſions weaken, — obliterate! How many

many will probably thus be encouraged in vice, how many deterred from virtue, or rendered leſs ſteady in their attachment to it!

Conſider laſtly, my friends, how many good or bad actions we may perform in one year. Their number is likewiſe exceeding great, though it ſhould not quite equal the number of our thoughts and words. Does ever one day in the year elapſe in which we do nothing either good or bad? Nay, do many hours of the day paſs by, in which what we do is abſolutely indifferent, and may not turn out either good or bad? Are we not daily either diligent or negligent, conſcientious or unconſcientious, in the tranſactions of our buſineſs? Enjoy we not daily the bounties of heaven either with cheerful gratitude or with ſtupid inſenſibility and indifference, either in rational moderation or in extravagance and intemperance? May we not daily either exerciſe ourſelves in meekneſs, in humility, in forbearance and humanity; or ſuffer ourſelves to be thrown into rage, or ſeduced into pride, into a froward and haughty behaviour, or to be otherwiſe offenſive to our neighbour? May we not daily give proofs of contentedneſs in our ſtation, of ſubmiſſion to the will of God, of truſt in his providence, of confidence in his help, or teſtimonies of the reverſe? Is any day likely to paſs but we are tempted in one way or other to ill, or allured and incited to good, and ſo our propenſity weakened to the one, or our love to the other more confirmed? Is it likely that

a day ſhould paſs without affording us ſome opportunity of being ſerviceable either to our family, to our friends, or to other men, by our advice, by our alms, by our credit, by our example, by other good offices we may do them? To what a ſum then muſt our good and bad actions in one year amount, according as we conduct ourſelves one way or the other! And how much muſt we likewiſe thus advance or retard our perfection and happineſs! If no action we perform be entirely without conſequence, how innumerable muſt the beneficial or injurious conſequences be that proceed from the actions of a whole year! And if to theſe actions you add the thoughts and the words of the ſame year, how great in general muſt be the ſum of the good or the evil which will be placed to your account in ſuch a portion of time, and which is ſo cloſely connected with the ſum of the happineſs or miſery you have in future to expect! How important then muſt one year be in this point of view! How much does it allow to be done of the work that God has enjoined us here to perform!

Say not, my friends: It is true, I can in one year do much good or harm; and if I had only one year to live, exceedingly much would depend on the uſe and application of this year; but as I have yet in all likelihood many, or at leaſt ſeveral years before me, what I neglect in one, I may eaſily make up for in another; the harm that I do I may hereafter repair. Nothing leſs than this, my pious hearers. Cuſtomary

mary as this concluſion is, and readily as mankind adopt it, it is not the leſs falſe and deceitful; and as little can the peace it procures us ſtand the teſt of the ſlighteſt reflection. No, the good that we have neglected in one year can, neither in regard to ourſelves or other men, never, abſolutely never, be recovered; and the evil we have committed in it can but very rarely be remedied or repaired. And this is the ſecond point, which on conſideration may convince us of the great importance of a year.

That we never can, properly ſpeaking, recover the good we have neglected, muſt be apparent to every reflecting perſon. We are creatures who cannot attain to their proper perfection at once; it can no otherwiſe be attained than by exerciſe, by the beſt application of their capacities and powers; and who never become ſo perfect, but they may and ſhould become more perfect ſtill. We ought therefore to be always gradually growing in knowledge, in virtue, in perfection and happineſs. In the preſent year, for example, we may advance five, in another ten, in a third twenty ſteps on the ladder that leads us to perfection and happineſs. Now if we ſtand ſtill in the firſt or ſecond year, or even go backward, can we ever make good what we have thus neglected? If we are very fortunate, we get in the ſucceeding year where we ſhould have been in the preſent; but it is impoſſible for us to reach the degree of perfection which we ſhould have reached if we had laboured with due earneſtneſs at

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our improvement and perfection, in that as well as the ſucceeding year. When we might have advanced ten paces farther in knowledge, in virtue, in piety, in capacity for enjoying the felicities of heaven, we have either not advanced at all, or only gone five paces forward; and conſequently we remain for ever and ever ſo much farther behind him who in the ſame time has done what we neglected to do, and now like us purſues with vigour the path of duty and virtue.

Irreparable however as this loſs is, it is yet the ſmalleſt we can ſuffer in this reſpect. If we neglect one year, let one year elapſe without ſeriouſly labouring at our improvement, we have not only irrecoverably loſt this time; we muſt not only do in the following year what we ought to have done in this: but we have in the mean time been weakening our abilities, our capacities for doing it; have in the mean time multiplied the difficulties attendant on it; have in the mean while afforded time and opportunity for our errors, our prejudices, our irregular luſts and appetites, or bad habits to ſtrengthen themſelves, and to ſet narrower limits to our freedom; we have in the mean time thought much evil, ſpoke and done much evil, the pernicious effects of which will in future appear in us, and obſtruct us very often in the good we then actually wiſh to do. We therefore have not only not made all the way that we might have made, but we have in the mean time been caſting a thouſand ſtumbling-

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blocks and obſtacles in it, which will very often force us to ſtop, and very often make us ſtumble and fall, and will never allow us in the following year to make ſuch advances on it as we might have done in this. So much do we deceive ourſelves, when we yield to the flattering idea, that we may make up in future for what we now neglect.

It is no leſs difficult in moſt caſes, my friends, to repair the miſchief we have done in one year by exertions in the next, or to remove the pernicious effects of it. Suppoſe that I ſhould utterly deteſt and abhor next year, the bad, the unchaſte, the malignant, the wicked thoughts which I have entertained in this year, will they therefore be effaced and eradicated from my ſoul? Will they not often return to me whether I will or no? Will they not probably often diſturb me in the midſt of my devotions, in the midſt of my moſt ſerious and important affairs? Probably they may perſecute me as long as I live; probably I ſhall ſubdue them a thouſand times; probably I ſhall be obliged to take them with me into the grave! Suppoſe that I ſincerely repent of the bad, the injurious, or the deceitful words, which I have ſpoken this year, and abſtain from them in the next; may they not in the mean time have made indelible impreſſions on others; may they not in the mean time have robbed an innocent perſon of his good name, or have made him, who was wavering between virtue and vice, declare himſelf for the latter; and may not theſe corrupt effects

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of my imprudent or malignant ſpeeches be of ſuch a nature, that all I can henceforward ſay and do againſt them will be of no avail? Suppoſe in ſhort that the unjuſt, the unreaſonable, the ſelfiſh actions that I have committed in this year occaſion me the moſt bitter anguiſh and floods of tears in the next; can I thereby repair the miſchief I have inflicted on my neighbour, the injuſtice I have done him, the trouble and vexation I have cauſed him? How ſeldom can I make good the loſs he has ſuſtained! how ſeldom can I offer him a compenſation adequate to my injuries! how much ſeldomer can I reſtore to him his loſt health, or his peace of mind! Or can I, by behaving to him now agreeably to my duty, make amends to him for my not having done ſo before? No, juſt as little as the good that we neglect in one year can be made good, ſo little, in moſt caſes, can the harm we have done in it even only in part be repaired. How important then muſt a year be, when we look to the conſequences of what we do or permit in it; and on the laſting, very often unterminable duration of theſe conſequences!

Attend to this particularly you who are ſtill in your youth, and as it were juſt ſetting out on your earthly career. One year of youth is commonly of more conſequence than ten years of manly or of more advanced age. In one year of youth you may and ſhould perform things, which either you cannot at all, or not without extreme difficulty, effect in

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all the future years of your life. The good you neglect in youth can never be compenſated, and the evil you then commit can never be completely repaired. And yet the young man commonly imagines that he may ſafely be more laviſh of his time than the aged; that one year is no great matter with him who has ſtill ſo many before him. But he much miſtakes. To the old man certainly his latter days are important. But the moſt of what he had to do is already done. He is now that which here on earth he might and could become. The young man has it yet to be; and on the uſe of his juvenile years eſpecially depends what he will be during the reſt of his life, and even in eternity, when this life is over. How important, how deciſive then muſt a year be to him?

Would you learn to underſtand the importance and the value of one year, my friends; conſider in the third place, how different the future years may be in many reſpects from the preſent; and how uncertain it is, whether we then ſhall or can perform and do what we now are able to do and to perform.

At preſent we are healthy and alert; at preſent we are in poſſeſſion of thoſe faculties of mind and body, which inſpire us with cheerfulneſs and alacrity, which fit us for continued affairs, for exerciſe in the auſterer virtues, for gaining the command of ourſelves, for fighting againſt ſin. Probably in the next year we may loſe this health, this alacrity, theſe faculties; perhaps ſickneſſes and pains may come

come upon us! And then we are frightened at every difficulty we meet with on the way of wiſdom and virtue; we found a retreat as ſoon as the enemy appears; we avoid everything that bears the name of toil and trouble, of conflict and ſelf-denial.

At preſent we are in eaſy circumſtances; at preſent we have time and leiſure for reflection, for reading, for frequent exerciſes of devotion; at preſent we have the means and opportunities for practiſing beneficence. Perhaps in the next year we may meet with misfortune and want; perhaps then our ſecular occupations and cares may be multiplied; perhaps we may then be deprived of the means of doing good to others!

At preſent we have children, friends, acquaintances about us, to whom we may be ſerviceable by our inſtruction, our advice, our example, whoſe temporal and eternal welfare we are enabled to advance. Perhaps in the enſuing year they may be raviſhed from us, or may be removed to a diſtance; and then we can never do again what now we might do for their good!

At preſent we have various auxiliaries, many ſtimulants and encouragements to good; at preſent we have parents, friends, teachers, to inſtruct, to admoniſh, to exhort, to aſſiſt us, who go before us with their example, who co-operate with us in our improvement, and facilitate to us the performance of our duty: Perhaps in the enſuing year we may loſe, altogether or in part, theſe helps,

helps, theſe incitements to virtue; perhaps in their ſtead we may meet with a thouſand impediments, obſtacles, temptations, and ſnares on the path of life; and if we are not able now to cope with them with courage and vigour, it is hardly poſſible that we then ſhall ſuſtain the combat and come off victorious.

At preſent in all theſe reſpects we are enlightened by the day, which renders our work eaſy and pleaſant; perhaps in the ſucceeding year the night may come on, the night of afflictions, of misfortunes, of the diſeaſes and infirmities of age, when no man can labour and work with ſucceſs. How important then for this reaſon likewiſe muſt one year be to us, and how much cauſe have we to preſs on with the moſt ardent zeal in the proſecution of the work that is given us to do, ſince we know not whether in the following year we may be able to purſue it ſo well, or even at all!

Conſider laſtly, my pious hearers, that each year may be the laſt to us, and learn from this circumſtance alſo how to eſtimate the value and importance of one year. And we cannot have the leaſt doubt how important it is, how much depends on the right uſe of it, if we repeatedly think with ourſelves: Perhaps this may be the laſt year that I ſhall attend with my brethren on the worſhip of God, and be inſtructed in the will of my creator and redeemer; the laſt I ſhall have for extending

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my reſearches, renouncing my errors, and enlarging and rectifying my knowledge: and then I go to the ſtate of departed ſpirits, where this knowledge, whatever its nature, will conſtitute the matter of my reflections, my entertainment with myſelf and my pleaſure. Perhaps this is the laſt year I ſhall have for labouring at my improvement, for exerciſing myſelf in virtue, and for proving the ſoundneſs of my faith by good works: and then ſucceeds the retribution; and this retribution will be exactly proportioned to the degree of my integrity and virtue. Perhaps this is the laſt year in which I can be uſeful to my brethren, and endeavour at their advantage; and then I muſt leave them; and then perhaps I ſhall lament that I was not of greater utility to my brethren, that I did not perform more good, and did not lay up larger treaſures for futurity. Perhaps this is the laſt year in which God will call me to repentance; that he will grant me his grace and the forgiveneſs of my ſins; that he will warn me of ruin and condemnation: and then this call will reach me no more; then theſe benefits will be no longer allowed me, then perhaps the moſt horrible perdition will be my portion; then will the night be come upon me, when no man can work. Ah no, to-day, while I hear the voice of God, I will hearken to it; I will do to-day, what perhaps I may not be able to do to-morrow! This year may be

be my laſt; the good or bad employment of it may be deciſive to me!

Of ſo great importance, my friends, of ſo great importance is one year to perſons who in one year may do ſo much good or evil; who can neither make amends for the good they neglect, nor fully repair the evil they have done; who are ſubject to ſo many changes and revolutions in their preſent condition; and whoſe life is ſo ſhort and precarious! And ſhall we not exclaim with our Saviour: — "I muſt work the works of him that ſent me," who has placed me in this nether world; I muſt labour at my improvement and perfection, muſt do as much good as at all times I can, muſt be as uſeful to other men as I can at all times be, "while it is day," ſo long as I have time, means, abilities, opportunity for it, becauſe "the night cometh, when no man can work!"

Yes, my dear friends, let this be the reſolution of you all! In ſuch diſpoſitions may you commence and complete this year! May it be truly important to you; and may the ſentiment of its importance urge you to the beſt and worthieſt employment of it! To us all may it prove abundantly fruitful in wiſe and pious thoughts, in inſtructive and improving words, in good and generous deeds! Far advance us all in knowledge, in virtue, in chriſtian integrity, and bring us conſtantly nearer to the mark of our high vocation! May every

one of us, while it is day to him, be doing that which he has to do on earth, and profecute it with unremitted and cheerful ardour, that the night of death may fall on none — o gracious Lord! on none, ere he have fitted himſelf for an entrance into eternal life!

New-year's day.

SERMON XXII.

Of the Detriment and Danger of too frequent Diſſipation and Diverſions.

GOD, thou haſt created us for pleaſure and for happineſs. But thou requireſt that we ſeek our pleaſure and our happineſs on the way of duty and of obedience to thy commands. Thou requireſt that, as rational creatures, we ſhould not ſuffer ourſelves to be captivated by every falſe ſhow of pleaſure and happineſs; and that as chriſtians who are called to immortality, we ſhould not look merely to the preſent, but principally to the future. Thy bountiful goodneſs has opened to us various ſources of delight, and made us ſuſceptible of manifold agreeable ſenſations; but they are not all of equal value, and the immoderate uſe of them may frequently convert them into ſources of trouble and miſery to us. Oh that we were ſo wiſe as conſtantly to make the beſt choice between the ſatisfactions and pleaſures that offer themſelves to us, and in the enjoyment of them never tranſ-

greſſed the rules of moderation! Do thou enlighten our feeble intellect, o Lord our God, that we may learn juſtly to underſtand and appreciate the value of things. Aſſiſt us to conquer our vehement propenſity to ſenſual objects. Let us never forget how ſhort and uncertain our life is, and how much depends on the proper or perverſe employment of it. Teach us to provide with unabated zeal for the perfection and happineſs of our immortal ſpirit, and grant, that we may all ſo manage our buſineſſes and pleaſures, our labours and recreations as is moſt agreeable to thy will and to the great purpoſes to which we are appointed in the preſent and in the future world. Bleſs to that end the doctrines that are preſently to be delivered to us. Grant that we may liſten to them with attention and a thirſt of ſalvation, lay them up in a good heart, and be actually improved by them. Hear us for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, our mediator and redeemer, in whoſe name we invoke thee further, ſaying: Our father, &c.

I THESSAL. IV. 11.

Study to be quiet; and to do your own buſineſs.

THE deſign of my preſent diſcourſe, my devout audience, is to caution you againſt the detriment and danger of too cloſe a purſuit of diſſipation and diverſions. May you attend to my warning voice in the ſame honeſt and ſincere intentions as thoſe which actuate the heart from whence it proceeds! Think not that the reſtraints, under which we are laid in many reſpects by our ſtation and calling, render us envious of the greater liberty which you enjoy; or that we exhort you to a temperate uſe of certain kinds of recreations and pleaſures, becauſe we muſt either partake in them with you but ſeldom, or entirely forego them. Were we, which God forbid, diſpoſed to lead a ſoft effeminate, ſenſual life, and to be more ſolicitous about our pleaſures than our obligations, we ſhould be no more deficient in opportunities than you; and we might perhaps do it without any ſtriking violation of public decorum. No, my beloved flock, envy, jealouſy, affectation, conſtraint, have no ſhare in the remonſtrances I ſhall make you. It is conviction, real conviction, ariſing from reflection and obſervation; it is a ſincere and earneſt deſire of promoting your happineſs, that urges me to entertain you at this time with ſuch matters as are much

more important than they appear to be, and which are therefore but too ſeldom weighed as their importance demands. Vouchſafe me then an attentive hearing. Let not cuſtom, or prevailing faſhion, let not your appetites and affections, but let truth and the fear of God pronounce upon the ſolidity of my reaſons and remonſtrances; and if you find them juſt and cogent, follow what your conſcience and the love you owe yourſelves ſhall dictate. The detriment and danger of too cloſe a purſuit of diſſipation and diverſions ſhall therefore be the ſubject of this morning's diſcourſe. We will divide it into three parts. In the firſt we will accurately define the ſubject of which we are ſpeaking; in the ſecond ſhew the detriment and danger of miſuſing it; and in the third ſubjoin ſome rules of wiſe and chriſtian conduct. Conſiderations, my friends, which will at once inform us of the import and reaſons of the apoſtolical precept in our text: Study to be quiet, and to mind your own buſineſs.

By diſſipations we here underſtand all kinds of occupations and amuſements which draw off our attention from the duties impoſed on us by our ſtation and calling, and direct it to ſuch things as make us forget what is unpleaſant or arduous in theſe duties, either by procuring us a gentle and placid repoſe, or by awakening in us more agreeable ſenſations and ideas. Such relaxations or recreations are more or leſs neceſſary to us all. Our

powers are limited. They would be exhauſted by too vigorous and too continued application. Nothing in particular more wearies the attention of our mind than when we direct it to one and the ſame object for a conſiderable length of time. Nothing more fatigues our body than a too long continuance of one ſort of motion, or of mechanical labour. Relaxation of a longer or a ſhorter ſpace from our ordinary affairs is therefore requiſite, if we would preſerve our mind or our body, or rather both together, from ſinking under the burden. This is not all. We thus prevent not only various and otherwiſe unavoidable evils, but we procure ourſelves the moſt important advantage. Nothing is more adapted to give new vigour both to our mind and body, than the enjoyment of ſome innocent and chaſtened amuſement. It has the ſame effect upon us as the refreſhing dew upon a flower nearly withered by the heat of the day. It infuſes into us new life, new ſpirits and alacrity to proſecute the duties of our calling, from the point we had ſtopt at; and we are thus enabled without much trouble to conquer difficulties, which elſe would have conquered us, if we had combated them with too obſtinate an aſſiduity. Uſeful and neceſſary however as theſe diſſipations and recreations are, yet they may eaſily exceed the bounds of moderation; and ſince this but too frequently happens, our pains will certainly not be

ſuperfluous if we ſearch for ſome rules whereby to judge of our behaviour in this regard.

I need not previouſly remind you, that all diſſipations and amuſements, wherein ſuch things are ſpoken or tranſacted as in themſelves are bad and contrary to good manners, are abſolutely to be avoided. To ſeek recreation in companies where ſlander and detraction exhale without reſtraint their peſtilential breath, where ambiguous expreſſions and indecent mirth ſupply the place of ſprightlineſs and wit, where riot and licentiouſneſs prevail; to ſeek recreation in ſuch companies, is to look for health among the ſick and for life among the dead. I now ſpeak only of ſuch ſorts of diſſipation and recreation as are abſolutely indifferent and innocent, and the moderate uſe whereof is not unbecoming the wiſe man and the chriſtian. And when do we go too great lengths in theſe? When does the uſe of theſe lawful diverſions and recreations become abuſe? Probably numbers will immediately anſwer, when it is too frequent and too often repeated. The anſwer is juſt; but it is too indeterminate, to give us much information, or to regulate ourſelves by it on all occaſions. We will endeavour to ſpeak ſomewhat more preciſely upon it.

The moſt innocent relaxations and recreations are exceſſes, when ſought and uſed by perſons who have no need of any relaxation and recreation. Reſt is proper only to the weary, wages only to the workman,

man, medicine only to the ſick. Whereon then do you found your claim to recreations and amuſements; you, who paſs your whole lives in inaction, in ſhameful indolence; who exert neither your bodily nor your mental powers in the ſervice of your fellow-beings; who live ſolely for yourſelves, or rather for the terrene animal part of you, and not for others alſo? What have you then done for the good of ſociety, that you vindicate to yourſelves its pleaſures? What weighty affairs have you to tranſact, for which you muſt collect new powers? Wretched people, you forget to what end you were deſigned. You know no uſeful, no generous employment for your capacities and talents; and therefore apply them merely to trifles, and in the manly, the beſt age of your life fall back into childhood. Time is a burden to you, becauſe you underſtand not its value. Therefore you wiſh the days could be ſhrunk into hours, and the hours into moments. And what right have you to require ſuch frequent diſſipation; you, who cannot indeed be peremptorily charged with idleneſs, but who ſhould and could do far more of what is good and uſeful than you actually do; you, whoſe buſineſs requires ſo little exertion, whoſe labour and induſtry are ſo moderate, that you are ſcarcely ever perhaps conſiderably fatigued and enervated by the faithful diſcharge of the functions of your calling? Would you, you who thus either lead a totally inactive and unprofitable life, or a life not active and uſeful enough,

enough, would you with juſtice, and without inconſiſtency. apply a part of your time to relaxation and recreation; employ the other part ſo as to render recreation needful. Apply firſt your utmoſt attention to the important concerns that fall to your ſhare as men, as members of the community, as chriſtians; firſt earneſtly exert your faculties; firſt labour faithfully and unremittingly; work at leaſt at times till you feel ſome degree of fatigue: and then ſeek innocent relaxation and recreation; then enjoy them with vivacity. You have deſerved them; they are become neceſſary; and they will be real recreations to you.

The moſt innocent diverſions and recreations will ſecondly be exceſſes, when by the manner in which they are uſed they ceaſe from being relaxations and recreations, and become either buſineſſes or burdens. And this they will be, when the powers of the body or the mind are too intenſely employed; when they cannot ſo well be ſaid to procure us reſt, as a change of one kind of uneaſineſs and violent motion for another, probably ſtill more hurtful, eſpecially when they laſt too long, and are protracted to downright fatigue. It is certainly an innocent and proper kind of recreation at times to enjoy with one's friends the ſocial repaſt, ſeaſoned with ſincerity and decent freedom, and in the enjoyment to be eaſy and merry. But if this happen too often; if pomp and luxury, more than friendſhip, mix in it; if we are by various means allured, or by our own weakneſs induced,

duced, to exceed the bounds of moderation; if it be thought a kind of honour or propriety to make it late in the night before we part: then we miſtake the deſign of this method of recreation; it is then no longer refreſhment, it is an inconvenient burden which enervates both the mind and the body; and the following day but too often teaches us, that we have reaped no freſh alacrity and vigour for induſtry and labour. The ſame may be ſaid of play. Whoever has a taſte for this ſort of amuſement; he who knows or can have no nobler pleaſure; who would not otherwiſe be able to fill up his vacant hours, and at the ſame time runs no riſk of being diſcompoſed by irregular paſſions: may indulge in this paſtime with due moderation, till he ſhall perhaps ſometime hence learn to think more ſeriouſly and more conſiſtently with the dignity of the man and the chriſtian. In the mean while, let him beware not to give ſo much into play that it ceaſe from being an innocent recreation. He that neglects for it that exerciſe which his body requires; he that makes it his purſuit unremittedly for ſeveral hours, and that frequently, perhaps daily; he who allows himſelf to be heated at it by the thirſt of gain, or is too fond of ſhewing his ſkill and too eager to obtain the victory; he who is as buſied and attentive in it as if he were occupied in ſome matter of the laſt importance: with him play ceaſes to be a recreation; it is a toilſome, childiſh employment; it is extravagance.

gance. He thence collects no refreshment for his powers, but idly consumes the very spirits that survived his previous labour.

Lastly the most innocent kinds of dissipation and recreation become prejudicial, when we so accustom ourselves to them, that we can scarcely bear a privation of them, or when we thereby lose our relish for more serious and more momentous objects. In either case we miss the only rational and legitimate aim we could propose by it; I mean, the rest that should refresh us after labour, and invigorate us for the alert renewal of it. In the former case, if we so accustom ourselves to certain diversions that we can scarcely endure their absence, we unnecessarily increase the number of our wants; and, since it is not possible for us to supply them at all times according to our wish, we thus expose ourselves to various kinds of uneasiness and vexation, which in their effects are in direct opposition to the benefit we propose by recreation. In the latter case, if by too frequent a use of certain distracting amusements we lose the taste for more serious and momentous objects, we manifestly do ourselves an injury, inasmuch as we are thereby tempted to negligence and sloth in the management of these important and momentous affairs, or to a total heedlessness and unconcern about them. We should however somewhat more circumstantially shew the various mischiefs that arise from the too frequent and inordinate use of even innocent dissipations, and the danger attendant on it.

In

In the firſt place, as I have already intimated, the affairs of our vocation are too often neglected for it. We are wont to look upon them as incumbrances which we bear and muſt bear merely from neceſſity, and which we rid ourſelves of as often and as ſpeedily as we can without the moſt evident diſadvantage. Inſtead of attending to them with all poſſible aſſiduity and diligence, we previouſly direct a part, perhaps the greateſt part, of our attention to the pleaſures and diſſipations we are eagerly expecting. For enjoying theſe more frequently and fully, we at times leave our moſt important affairs to be tranſacted by others, who ſeldom manage or can manage them with the ſame fidelity and prudence as we ſhould ourſelves. This is equally applicable to the mother and the father of a family; to the merchant and ſcholar, as well as to the artiſt and mechanic; and ſuch a conduct in all conditions of life muſt be attended by more or leſs diſorder and confuſion; it muſt often be attended by the total ruin of families. And the rather, ſince by the great intereſt we take in all kinds of diſſipation and diverſions, and by the various connexions we enter into with others on theſe occaſions, we are tempted to run into ſuch expenſes as bear no juſt proportion to the means we poſſeſs, or the income on which we may ſafely reckon; or which, even if our outward circumſtances are not injured or impaired by them, prevent us from fulfilling the duties of chriſtian beneficence in their utmoſt extent, and from doing ſo much good as we might

might and ſhould have done in a more retired way of life. A loſs that not only robs us in this world of the pureſt, the divineſt gratification, but alſo of the moſt glorious retributions in that which is to come.

The too eager purſuit of diſſipations and ſocial amuſements have ſecondly with very many perſons a cruel influence on the education of their children. That the education of children is an extremely important and arduous affair, and that it is chiefly the province of parents, and not ſolely of tutors or domeſtics, I take to be an undeniable propoſition; and if any man were ſo unhappy as to doubt it, I might indeed pity him; but I ſhould give myſelf little trouble to ſet him right, becauſe in all probability my pains would be loſt. Is it then your duty, you, whom God has conſtituted parents, is it your duty and your moſt arduous duty, to educate your children, that is, to form their hearts and minds, and render them wiſe and virtuous; how can you properly comply with this duty, if you give full ſcope to your fondneſs for faſhionable diſſipations and pleaſures; if you abſent yourſelves ſo often and ſo long from your children; if all this while you leave them to themſelves, or to the charge of others? I will allow, that the amuſements you purſue are perfectly harmleſs. But in the mean time to what dangers are your children expoſed! Probably they are ſurrounded by vicious perſons, who put on the maſk in your preſence, and wait with impatience for the moment when they may lay aſide all reſtraint.

At

At ſuch times the minds and the hearts of theſe innocents, whoſe welfare is ſo dear to you, lie open to every bad impreſſion, and there is no one by to guard them from ſeduction. Now probably falls the ſeed of ſome fault, ſome ill quality, or ſome vice, into their tender and ſuſceptible hearts, which privily ſprouts up, and in time brings forth a deadly fruit. Now the faireſt bloſſoms of wiſdom and virtue, already beginning to expand, are blighted and withered by a peſtilential breath. Suppoſe however that they are not ſurrounded by vicious perſons, yet are they commonly by ſuch as have not that juſt and delicate ſenſe of the true, the beautiful and good, which is ſo neceſſary to the due formation of a youthful heart; who rarely are free from falſe maxims, from ſuperſtitious errors and prejudices of every kind, and who ſcarcely ever obſerve that ſtrict propriety in their diſcourſes and actions which diſcreet parents obſerve in the preſence of their children. All of them circumſtances which cannot but be prejudicial to your children, and are often moſt fatal to them. And can you in ſuch circumſtances frequently and without neceſſity abſent yourſelves from your children; and without uneaſineſs and a ſmarting conſcience purſue idle diſſipations and amuſements, which neither a concern for your health, nor the obligations of real friendſhip, require at your hands?

A third evil that ariſes from the abuſe of theſe objects is, that it confirms a man in his earthly temper:

per: I am thoroughly aware, that we are terrene creatures; that we cannot be ſolely employed on inviſible and ſpiritual objects. Yet we are not totally terrene. The better part of our being, the part of us that remains for ever, is not clay; it is the offspring of God; it is deſigned for a heavenly life. If we make what is earthly and temporal our main concern; if we are always buſied about ſuch things alone; if we even devote to them the little time that remains to us from our ordinary affairs: we muſt of courſe by inſenſible degrees become earthly-minded. Our rational, our immortal ſoul muſt neceſſarily be much injured, be biaſſed ever farther and farther from its proper deſtination, and be continually more unfit for the ſuperior and celeſtial life for which it is deſigned. And how can too frequent diſſipations have other effects? Will not the attention of thoſe who are attached to them be ſolely directed to ſenſual and outward things? Are not various preliminaries requiſite for appearing in great circles with propriety and advantage? Do we not thus get the habit of ſetting a greater value on the ſeveral articles of dreſs, decoration, furniture, than they deſerve, and deeming them of greater importance than they really are? Are they not the general topics of converſation and diſcourſe? Does not the exorbitant value that is ſet upon them very frequently excite envy, jealouſy and ſtrife? Does not worldly-mindedneſs ſo univerſally prevail in moſt companies, as to make it not rarely a matter of offence

fence to ſpeak of weighty, profitable, moral and religious concerns, and cauſe ſuch ſubjects to be conſidered as incompatible with rational mirth? But is not ſuch a way of thinking pernicious in the higheſt degree? Does it not expoſe us to the danger of loſing ſight of God and religion and the true end of our being, in ſhort everything that is great and generous? Does it not entice us to a hundred actions that degrade the man, and are contrary to the vocation of the chriſtian? Does it not deprive us of all comfort in misfortune? Does it not render death and eternity, which yet we cannot ſhun, moſt dreadful? Is it not manifeſtly at variance with the temper that is to prevail in the kingdom of the juſt, and ſhall we not be rendered by it ever more unqualified for being received into their ſociety hereafter?

Hence laſtly it happens, my friends, that too intenſe a purſuit of diſſipation deprives us of the neceſſary time for the exerciſes of private devotion, and gradually brings on a coldneſs and indifferency towards all religion. Our knowledge, our faith, our hope, our virtue and piety, require to be aſſiduouſly nouriſhed and ſupported by the reading of holy ſcripture and other good books, by reflection and contemplation, by ſelf-examination and prayer, in order that they may hold out againſt the attacks of error, of infidelity, of ſcepticiſm, of diſappointments and vice, and render us wiſe and happy. To this end the public exerciſes of devotion and wor-

ſhip, how excellent ſoever they are in the main, are not of themſelves ſufficient. The chief part of what we have to mind in this reſpect muſt be performed alone and in retirement. But do you perform this, and can you perform it, you, who ſo greedily run after all ſorts of diſſipation and amuſement? Do you at leaſt apply as much time to the augmentation of your knowledge, to the improvement of your heart, to the invigoration of your faith, to the confirmation of your hopes and your piety, as you conſume in the gratification of your appetites for ſenſual pleaſure, or in what you term the duties of faſhionable life, and of elegant company? Do not frequently ſeveral days glide by, do not at times whole weeks paſs away, without one ſerious reflection that you are chriſtians and deſigned for eternity; without once examining the ſtate of your mind and your courſe of life; without paſſing one or more hours in ſuch meditations as are profitable to your immortal ſpirit, and may fit you for the life to come? No wonder, if, with ſuch a conduct, your faith yield to every objection and doubt, your virtue to every temptation, your hopes to every danger; if you dare not preſume to manifeſt your veneration for God and Jeſus Chriſt in the face of the unbeliever or the ſcorner, and among the friends of vice to maintain the cauſe of virtue. No wonder if you either become yourſelf a contemner of religion and the ſlave of vanity and vice, or that you halt and waver between truth and error, and are continually

running from good to ill, from one opinion to another, without ever acting upon juſt and ſolid principles. Is not ſuch a condition however extremely hazardous, and have you not ample cauſe to regard and to avoid, as prejudicial and fatal, all that plunges and detains you in it?

Theſe ſurely are conſiderations highly adapted to convince every reaſonable man, that too frequent diſſipations are exceedingly detrimental to us, and that they are inſeparably combined with various perils. Should I have been ſo happy as to rouze you to reflect on this matter, and to cauſe you ſome alarm on theſe injuries and this danger; avail yourſelves of the following rules of diſcreet and chriſtian conduct.

Impartially conſider at times the emptineſs, the vanity, the irkſomeneſs of moſt kinds of diſſipation and paſtime, though people in general ſet ſo high a value on them. Can you think ſo freely and undiſturbed amidſt them, can you ſpeak ſo familiarly and frankly, and ſo ſafely appear in your natural frame, as you ought, were they really what they pretend to be, the relaxation of your mind? Are you not commonly obliged to watch far more attentively over yourſelf, and to obſerve all your words and geſtures, than in the moſt important affairs, if you would neither affront any one, nor expoſe yourſelf to ridicule? Are you not very often reduced to the neceſſity of ſtraining all the faculties of your mind in the moſt unpleaſant manner, to fill up the

vacuity of converſation by a thouſand frivolities? Do you not in many other inſtances feel an irkſome conſtraint? In how many kinds of diſſipation and paſtime may not the paſſions be ſtirred up, whether the love of lucre, or ambition, or anger, which are equally hurtful both to the body and mind, and which conſequently have no right to the appellative of relaxation and amuſement? And in what then conſiſts the ſo much vaunted pleaſure of the generality of great companies, the generality of public and private entertainments? All men eagerly run in queſt of this pleaſure, but no one finds it; and yet no one is honeſt enough to ſay that he has not found it, becauſe he is afraid of contradicting the judgment of the reſt, and of being accuſed of a want of taſte. Therefore every one boaſts, againſt his conviction, of a pleaſure he has not enjoyed, or only in a ſubordinate degree; and by theſe means alone are moſt kinds of diſſipation and amuſements ſupported in the unmerited reputation which prejudice, miſrepreſentation and falſe delicacy have conferred upon them.

Another rule of conduct is this: — Often and ſeriouſly reflect on the ineſtimable value of time, and the extreme velocity of it. How much I pity the man who is for ever in ſearch of freſh means of paſtime! Time alas flies ſufficiently ſwift; it admits of no detention. And yet you want to drive it on! you want to give it fleeter pinions! Shall you be of the ſame mind when once, and how ſoon may not that happen, the ſhort ſpan that is granted you

is

is drawing near to its end; when you have no longer to reckon by years and months, but muſt count by days and hours? Shall you think thus, when you are firſt to give an account to yourſelf and then to the judge of the world, of your employment of this time? Woe to him, who on caſting up his accounts, finds that he has not only beſtowed ſome of it occaſionally on his neceſſary recreation; but has often daily laviſhed away large portions of his time in follies and impertinencies, and thereby neglected the opportunity for laying up in ſtore treaſure for hereafter! I muſt ſpeak more plainly. Woe to him who finds on his death-bed, that he has paſſed almoſt every evening of his ſhort life, that is, almoſt all the time his buſineſs left him free, in idle companies, in unprofitable and often ſinful converſe, in play, or in any other loitering manner, derogatory to the dignity of the man and the chriſtian! What reproaches will he not then make himſelf! How much will he deplore his murdered time! How ardently, but how fruitleſsly, will he wiſh that he had employed the greater part at leaſt of his leiſure on weightier matters, in the improvement of his knowledge, in the practice of virtue and piety, in preparation for his life to come!

A third rule of conduct is this: — Of all recreations and diverſions, chuſe ſuch as are moſt innocent and profitable. I have not the leaſt intention to forbid you amuſement in general, or ſocial amuſement in particular. God and religion require no

ſuch thing. But they will have us to make a prudent ſelection from among the various kinds of pleaſures we may enjoy. And to this end allow me to offer you a few ſuggeſtions. The pleaſures of domeſtic life; the pleaſure which tender and rational parents find in converſing with their children, in forming their minds and hearts, and even in ſharing in their innocent amuſements and ſports; intercourſe with a few ingenuous and worthy friends, where, free from affectation or reſerve, we may hold profitable and agreeable converſe, where we need not care if our ignorance or our weakneſs appear, and may ſhew ourſelves in our real diſpoſition, where none will reproach us even if our diſcourſe ſhould be dull; the peruſal of ſuch books as require no great exertion of mind, which have but little relation to our ordinary affairs and may enrich us with many different kinds of knowledge, or confirm us in our generous and virtuous notions; the contemplation of nature, the mild, ſedate perception of its beauties, which we ſhare with a friend, and in ſharing elevate; theſe are pleaſures! How pure, how innocent, how diverſified, how calculated to procure agreeable recreation to the mind and new vigour to the body! Learn to underſtand and to enjoy theſe pleaſures, my friends, and you will want no caution againſt the abuſe of the reſt. I will however juſt propoſe to you one ſtill nobler kind of recreation. Viſit occaſionally the forlorn, the poor, the deſtitute, the widow and the orphan; not for the purpoſe

purpoſe of ſatisfying your curioſity; but go to them with good advice and ſubſtantial ſuccours. Miſtake not this for a melancholy recreation. It affords to a generous and humane heart, indeed not in all, but in moſt inſtances, far more pleaſure than diſpleaſure; and the recollection of the good we have done by it, of the comfort and joy we have thus diſpenſed abroad, will become a perennial fountain of the moſt agreeable emotions.

Laſtly, my friends, be jealous of your real independence. Let nothing reduce you to ſervitude. No ſort of diſſipation and amuſement ſhould ever become ſo neceſſary to you, that you cannot forego it without uneaſineſs and pain. You cannot tell but that your circumſtances may ſo alter that you muſt abſolutely give it up. The wiſe man, the chriſtian, makes himſelf ready for all events; and on that very account is his happineſs the ſureſt, and his pleaſure ſubject to the feweſt abatements. Oh ſtrive to be ſuch wiſe men, ſuch chriſtians. Study to acquire the approbation of God and your conſcience, as the pureſt and moſt exuberant ſource of refreſhment and peace. Conſider duty and pleaſure not as totally different and irreconcilable things; but ſeek and expect true pleaſure chiefly from the delight and fidelity wherewith you fulfil your obligations. Regard yourſelves conſtantly as ſtrangers and ſojourners in this world, and eſteem and treat at all times the preſent according to the connection in which it ſtands with the future. This, and this alone, will render you wiſe, delighted and happy.

SERMON XXIII.

The Value or the Importance of the Doctrine of our Immortality.

GOD, eternal, inexhauſtible fountain of life and happineſs, life and happineſs inceſſantly flow from thee on all thy creatures in heaven and on earth; and we, thy children, thy eminently endowed and favoured children, we expect everlaſting life and everlaſting happineſs from thee! Of this thou thyſelf haſt certified us by thy ſon Jeſus. Of this thou haſt thyſelf given us the moſt infallible teſtimony by his reſurrection from the dead. And in the ſentiment of it we rejoice together this day in thy preſence; yes, in this will we rejoice before thee for ever. Oh praiſed, ever praiſed be thy glorious goodneſs, by which we are born again to this lively hope, which has given us ſuch grounds of conſolation and joy, and unfolded to us ſuch proſpects in a life to come! God, what openings into the height and depth of thy eternal ways, haſt thou thus given us! What a radiance haſt thou poured upon our path

path of life and upon all that befalls us! What energy haſt thou granted us to good, what comfort in afflictions, what aſſurance in death! How confidently and cheerfully may we now meditate on thee, our creator and father, our maſter and rewarder! How eaſily bear all the troubles of life! How reſolutely accompliſh every duty of it! How calmly behold its end approaching! How aſſuredly expect the wages of righteouſneſs and fidelity at thy hand! Yes, we are happy as men, and far happier as chriſtians; and that which we at preſent are, is only a noviciate, only a foretaſte, only a preliminary to that which we ſhall be hereafter! Oh then that the conſciouſneſs of our high appointment, the ſentiment of our preſent and future happineſs, and joy in thy parental favour ever animated our hearts, attended us every where, and rendered our whole lives an inceſſant ſong of praiſe for thy great goodneſs! No, far, far be all diſcontent and murmurs, all anxious cares, from us whom thou haſt appointed to an everlaſting life! Far, far be it from us to be ſlothful and weary in well-doing, or ever to ſtand ſtill on the path of virtue, ſince thou alloweſt us to hope for everlaſting rewards! No, to walk uprightly and cheerfully before thee, readily to be and to do and to ſuffer, whatever in purſuance of thy will we are here deſigned to be and to do and to ſuffer; and to be rendering ourſelves conſtantly more ſuſceptible and worthy of the bleſſed immortality: be that the glorious object of our conſtant purſuit,

purſuit, our ever nearer approach! Sanctify to the promotion of theſe aims, the meditations and the devotions in which we are now to be employed, and favourably receive our prayer through Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe name we further addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

JOHN xi. 25, 26.

I am the reſurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die.

THE ſentiment of immortality is unqueſtionably the moſt bleſſed of all ſentiments: the hope of a better and everlaſting life, the ſublimeſt hope of which our nature is ſuſceptible. And when, my pious hearers, ſhould this ſentiment more pervade us, when this hope more rejoice and comfort us, than on ſuch days as this? Is not the feſtival of the reſurrection of Jeſus from the dead the feſtival of our immortality? Is not his heavenly, his divine life an earneſt of our future ſuperior life, our everlaſting felicity? Is not the reſuſcitation of our bodies indiſſolubly connected with the reſuſcitation of his body? Do not his exaltation and glory certify us of the ſtate of retribution that awaits us hereafter? Yes, Chriſt has brought life and undecaying exiſtence to light through his goſpel! he has deprived

prived death of its terrors, and the grave of its formidable aſpect. He has put out of doubt the important doctrine of our immortality and of our future ſtate of retribution; it is now no longer the bare wiſh of the unhappy or the dying; no longer a difficult, perplexing problem in the ſchools of the learned; no longer a faint conjecture of the philoſophers: but a demonſtrated truth, confirmed by divine authority; an eſſential part of the knowledge and belief of many millions of perſons; a truth that is inſeparably connected with the whole intellectual ſyſtem of the chriſtian, which is become a leading principle of his underſtanding and a ruling ſentiment of his heart, which may indeed be ſhaken and obſcured, but can never be entirely extinguiſhed or rendered totally inefficient, and from which the unlearned as well as the learned, the moſt confined as well as the moſt liberal thinker, may to the full draw wiſdom, virtue, conſolation and felicity. Oh, my dear friends, if we, if the world were beholden to the riſen Jeſus for nothing more than this belief and this hope, how could we, how could the world ever competently thank him for it? But do we underſtand and feel likewiſe the entire value of this benefit, my dear friends? Are we ſenſible how happy we are become by it? or may perhaps the long poſſeſſion and enjoyment of this boon conceal from us a part of its worth? Come then, my pious hearers, let us devote a few moments to the recollection of its magnitude, and thus endeavour to excite our hearts

hearts to grateful joy. We will consider the importance of the doctrine of our immortality and of a future state of retribution as established by Jesus. This will render inestimable to us the assurance of our Saviour in the text: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.

The doctrine of our immortality and of a future state of retribution is important to our mind; important to our heart; important in regard to our conduct: important in the enjoyment of satisfaction and pleasure; important under the pressure of afflictions; important in the hour of death. Six particulars on which we now propose to expatiate somewhat more circumstantially.

How important is this doctrine to our mind! What difficulties, what ænigmas does it not unravel! What obscurities does it not dispel by its radiance! What a safe clue through all the mazes of divine decrees and human events does it not afford us! Is man entirely dust; is his spirit as well as his body destroyed in death; has he nothing to hope for after it: how shall I explain what happens in the world, what befalls mankind, what occurs to myself? Wherefore those diversified, copious and extensive pre-arrangements that I discover both in the natural and moral world for the preservation, for the improvement, for the perfection of mankind, if they be to live only a few years

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or a few days on earth, and then ceaſe to be? Wherefore ſuch grand, vaſt and magnificently promiſing diſpoſitions, ſuch latent principles, capacities and energies in man, and which are ſo frequently not at all, and never intirely unfolded, if he be ordained for this terreſtrial life alone? Wherefore thoſe wants, thoſe trials and afflictions, thoſe grievous chaſtenings by which he is obliged ſo laboriouſly to learn to think and live, if both thought and life are utterly to ceaſe, when he has ſcarcely completed theſe painful ſtudies? Wherefore that anxious ſolicitude about an hereafter, thoſe wiſhful looks into futurity, which accompany him at every turn, and ſo oft prevent him from enjoying the preſent, if there were no hereafter for him? How myſterious would his condition be, how incomprehenſible his deſtination! — And when I ſee one nation highly favoured, another neglected; there radiant light, here thick darkneſs, there happineſs, here miſery, there liberty, here ſlavery and bondage prevail; when I perceive myriads of human beings cut off in their infancy and youth, ſo many ſuffering what they have not deſerved, ſo many never rejoicing in their life; when I ſee ſo many wiſe and virtuous perſons perſecuted and oppreſſed, ſo many fools, ſo many tyrants and profligates proſperous and honoured, ſo many great and generous actions unrequited, ſo many crimes unpuniſhed: how can I reconcile all this with the wiſdom and goodneſs and impartiality

impartiality of the governour of the world; how can I believe his exiſtence; or think him the moſt perfect being, unleſs another life, unleſs a ſtate of retribution awaits us?

But now, my dear friends, that we are aſſured of this other life, this ſtate of retribution by Jeſus, how all clears up! What a radiance is now diffuſed over all theſe difficulties! Now no arrangements of God are too great and too coſtly for rendering man fit for his exalted, everlaſting appointment. Now there is no previous diſpoſition, no capacity, no power in us, that will not be ſooner or later, here or there evolved and brought into action. Now no diſcipline is too ſtrict, no chaſtiſement too harſh, no affliction too ſevere, for preparing the human being for his higher perfection and happineſs. Now he learns nothing in vain; renders himſelf expert in nothing to no purpoſe; acquires no good quality, which he may not hereafter employ for ever. Now he has reaſon to provide more for the future than for the preſent, to live more in the future than in the preſent; ſince that is infinitely more important to him than this. Now he need not be ſurpriſed at the unequal diſtribution of the bounties and favours of heaven, between nation and nation, between one perſon and another. They are but on the firſt ſtage of exiſtence, and eternity is rich, is inexhauſtible in means to make them amends; every one will ſooner or later attain to his deſtination.

Now

Now we need not doubt of the wiſdom and goodneſs of the methods of divine providence; ſince they extend far beyond the boundaries of this life, and futurity will ſhew them to us as all irreproachable. Now we may ſee without perplexity ſo many bloſſoms of human life and human virtue wither, and ſo many charming fruits drop off before they attain maturity; they will bloom again and bear more generous fruit in a future life. Now we may ſee, without murmuring, the innocent, the upright ſuffer, and profligates and tyrants triumph; the ſorrows of the former will hereafter be turned into joy, and the triumphs of the latter into ſhame and confuſion. Now no good act goes unrewarded; no crime unpuniſhed. Darkneſs will hereafter give place to light; every difficulty be removed; every knot untied; and whatever at preſent may look like diſorder, confuſion, injuſtice, will be manifeſted to us as preparation and means to the moſt beautiful order, to the completeſt harmony. And what an important, conſoling doctrine is this to our mind! How muſt it facilitate and rectify its thoughts and its judgments! From how many miſtakes ſecure it! How ſafely lead it to the knowledge of truth!

The doctrine of our immortality and a future ſtate of retribution is highly important to our heart. How does our heart pant, the heart of every perſon of reflection and tender diſpoſitions, how it pants after immortality! With what horror does

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it ſtart at the thought of total annihilation! And what endowments, what enjoyments of this deciduous life are commenſurate with the deſires, with the affections of our heart? What can completely and for ever ſatisfy it? What ſecret uneaſineſs frequently accompanies the fulleſt enjoyment of it! Of how much greater, purer, more laſting joys and bleſſings does our heart form deſires and preſaging anticipations! Of what comprehenſive, ardent, active love to God and man does it not feel itſelf ſuſceptible? And how often are its nobleſt feelings, its moſt bleſſed emotions weakened, ſuppreſſed or even actually changed into ſources of pain and trouble by the limitations of our preſent ſtate, by our connections with outward things!

And muſt not our heart riſe and expand with the ſure and certain hope of immortality? Are we immortal: what deſires, what preſages, what expectations are now too bold? What diſpoſitions, what capacities, what generous affections can we poſſeſs that will not be unfolded, employed, gratified? Where is the tender and ſuſceptible character which in that better world will not find the pureſt, nobleſt nouriſhment for its virtuous ſenſibility; where the zealous, cordial friend of God and man, who there will not be animated, inflamed with the moſt exalted love? And what human ſenſibility is capacious enough, entirely to contain the tranſports of that ſuperior ſtate? Tranſports

that

that neither ſatiety nor languor abate; that no pain, no trouble embitter; which no oppreſſive ſurfeit, but ſedate and genial ſatisfaction attends. No, be thou eaſy, be cheerful, o my heart, in thy aſpirations after continuance, after celeſtial beatitudes! Thou panteſt not in vain for immortality; thou longeſt not fancifully for ſuperior endowments, for purer joys! Thou wilt ſucceed in thy aim, however exalted. Thou wilt entirely feel and enjoy, what at preſent thou only preſageſt as poſſible and deſirable.

And what a raviſhing ſentiment of our grandeur and our dignity muſt the idea of immortality ſhed into our heart! What an influence muſt it have on the judgment we paſs on ourſelves, on the reverence we owe to ourſelves, on our whole tenour of thought and conduct! To feel ourſelves immortal, implies to feel ourſelves grand and noble; capable of doing and enjoying whatever is beautiful and good and excellent; capable of proceeding from one degree of perfection to another, and of becoming ever wiſer, ever better, ever happier through the infinite ages of eternity. O exalted, bliſsful ſentiment! Take entire poſſeſſion of our hearts, ſhut all their avenues to every groveling thought, every ignominious appetite; and penetrate and pervade them with thoughts, with emotions and purſuits that are worthy of thee!

How important therefore thirdly muſt the doctrine of immortality and the future ſtate of retri-

bution be in regard of our virtue; how important in all temptations to negligence and to ſin! How often will that virtue faint whoſe proſpects and hopes are bounded by this ſhort and precarious life, whoſe fruits muſt periſh in the grave! How often decline the conteſt with luſts and paſſions, or ſink under their attacks, ſince the prize of victory is ſo tranſient, and to-day or to-morrow, with the victor himſelf, muſt moulder in the duſt! And how ſhould the man, to whom futurity affords nothing to fear and nothing to hope, reſiſt the temptations to ſin and to indolence in good, when he can commit the wicked act to which he is tempted in ſecret, when he can indulge the ſinful luſt that allures him without detriment and without diſgrace, and when he cannot perform the good deed without loſs, without trouble and fatigue, without expoſing himſelf to danger? What ſhall give him ſtrength and courage to ſacrifice his property, his pleaſures, his powers, even his life to duty, or to the benefit of his brethren, if he have no equivalent to expect for theſe ſacrifices, and muſt loſe all with his life? How ſeldom then will ambition or any nobler principles be able to ſupply the place of the belief of our immortality and future retributions!

No, to thee, the riſen Jeſus, who, by thy reſurrection, haſt brought me to believe in my immortality, and begotten me again to the hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that

fadeth

fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for me, to thee I am chiefly indebted for inclination and ability to good! Invigorated by this faith, by this hope I can ſubdue myſelf, overcome the world, be more than conqueror, and perſevere unto the end. Is my ſoul immortal; does a better, a ſuperior life await me after death: then I can loſe nothing in the ſervice of virtue, in the ſervice of God. Virtue rewards her votaries with advantages and joys, that neither death nor the grave can raviſh from them; God recompenſes his faithful ſervants with everlaſting rewards. No, let the path I have here to walk be never ſo ſteep, never ſo rugged: undeviating and undiſmayed I will purſue it even unto the end; ſince it leads to perfection, to felicity! Let the battle I have to fight, be never ſo hard: firmly will I hold out; ſince I am ſure of the prize of the victory, and this prize is worthy of the ſtruggle! Let it coſt me never ſo much to gain the maſtery over myſelf, to ſubdue my luſts, to become wiſe and virtuous: never ſhall I purchaſe theſe advantages too dear; ſince I work not for a few days or years, I work for eternity; the maſtery I now obtain over myſelf, the wiſdom and virtue that I here acquire, I ſhall never loſe, they will hereafter form the baſis of my greater liberty, of my ſuperior wiſdom and virtue! Let my duties be never ſo arduous, require never ſo much attention and exertion, never ſo much renunciation of my eaſe and convenience; let them exhauſt my powers

and overwhelm me with their burden: never ſhall I repent my zeal and my fidelity, never relax; ſince thereby I exerciſe my faculties, thereby learn to uſe them according to the will of him who conferred them on me, to the benefit of my brethren, and ſo am qualifying myſelf for higher duties, for greater matters in the future world! This is the time for ſowing. The more carefully, the more faithfully I cultivate the field that is here allotted me; the better the grain I caſt into it; the more abundantly I ſow: ſo much the more fruit and ſo much the richer fruits ſhall I reap of it at the great day of harveſt. No, I will do good, and never be weary in well-doing; ſince in due time I ſhall reap without ceaſing.

The doctrine of our immortality and of a better, ſuperior life after death is fourthly important, my pious hearers, in a view to the enjoyment of ſatisfaction and pleaſure. How gloomy, without this proſpect, would the enjoyment of all, even the nobleſt pleaſures and ſatisfactions be to the thoughtful man; and how cheerfully and comfortably may he reſign himſelf to them, when animated by this proſpect!

At preſent I enjoy the ſight of the fair univerſe of God; ſee and admire on all hands the traces of his ſovereign wiſdom and bounty; find in it the nobleſt nouriſhment and employment for my underſtanding and my heart; diſcovering ſources of knowledge and delight that are inexhauſtible, and

from

from which I long to draw for ever. But, muſt I thsn to-day or to-morrow for the laſt time view this theatre of the divine glory? Muſt all theſe beauties ſink from before me into never-ending night? Muſt my thirſt for knowledge be only excited, but never allayed? No, I need not be afraid of this deplorable fate. A ſuperior, an immortal life awaits me. There will new ſcenes, ſtill grander theatres, of admiration open to my view; and I ſhall contemplate them with a ſtronger ſight, with ſuperior powers of mind. Eternity is unbounded; the kingdom of God is immenſe; and my continuance ſhall have no end. What does not this allow me to hope!

At preſent I enjoy the pleaſure which the inveſtigation of truth procures me. I perceive a few diſtant traces, ſome ſcattered rays of it; am on the way to approach it nearer, and to diſcover it more completely; and enjoy by anticipation the tranſporting view. But, muſt I then, when I am come neareſt to it, for ever loſe all hope of actually attaining to the knowledge of it? Be robbed for ever of all the fruits of my intenſe reflections, of my toilſome reſearches? No, I am immortal; a ſuperior life awaits me; there I ſhall behold the truth, which I now only deſcry in the dawn, in its full effulgence, ſhall pierce into its ſanctuary, and be ſecure of its poſſeſſion for ever.

At preſent I enjoy the pleaſure of beneficence. But how ſeldom can I enjoy it as I wiſh! How

limited are my abilities and my means! What totally different acts of beneficence can I conceive, and wish to perform as my greatest happiness! And must I then, when I have scarcely tasted this pleasure, and am become withal more capable of its enjoyment, lose all the means and ability, and mingle with inert and sluggish matter, acting without consciousness and design, without sentiment? No, I am immortal; beneficence must and will be my everlasting employment; a state awaits me, where I may more freely addict myself to this divine propensity, satisfy it more fully, and disseminate far more joy and felicity around me.

At present I enjoy the pleasure of generous friendship and virtuous love. Never do I see without cordial delight the friend of my heart, and every communication of our perceptions, of our feelings, of our sorrows and our joys connects us closer, makes us dearer and more indispensably necessary to each other. And is this generous friendship, this virtuous affection to be of only a momentary duration; is it to be destroyed for ever in death? No, I am immortal; a state awaits me, where never-ending love, the purest affection reigns, where beings of the best, most virtuous, most tender dispositions are all one heart and one mind.

At present I enjoy the pleasure of devotion; the most exalted of which man is susceptible. My spirit ascends to her creator and father, rejoices in him, reposes on him, feels herself great and happy in

in the adoration of him, and pants after nearer communion with him. And ſhall I be bereaved of this pleaſure, when I am beſt acquainted with its value, and am become moſt capable of its completer enjoyment? No, I am immortal. Nothing can diſſolve the intimate, the bleſſed relations wherein I ſtand to my creator and father. Everlaſtingly ſhall I be making nearer approaches to this moſt perfect being; everlaſtingly drawing from this inexhauſtible ſource of light and life and knowledge and felicity.

Yes, enjoy, o man, o chriſtian, enjoy the innocent, generous ſatisfactions and pleaſures that are vouchſafed thee in this mortal ſtate; enjoy them with a contented, a cheerful heart, and let not the enjoyment of them be embittered by the idea of a ſhort and precarious duration. Thou art immortal; and thy ſatisfactions and pleaſures are immortal too. They are the earneſt of purer ſatisfactions, of ſuperior pleaſures that await thee in a better world; foretaſtes of the greater, more laſting felicity which is there prepared for thee!

If the doctrine of our immortality and of a future ſtate of retribution be important in reſpect to the enjoyment of the pleaſures and ſatisfactions of this life, it is of no leſs importance in reſpect to the afflictions and ſorrows that befall us in it. And indeed, my dear friends, what ſhould comfort a man under the various adverſities and ſufferings of this life, what ſhould teach him to bear them with patience and fortitude, if he had not a better futurity

to expect? Were he to ſuffer without object, without utility, and at laſt ſink under his ſufferings and expire for ever? Were his ſufferings an ultimate end, and not means to a higher object? By this ſuppoſition the entire weight of affliction lies on him; he is tortured by the recollection of the paſt, by the ſentiment of the preſent, the dread of approaching ſufferings. Thus he could never truly enjoy his life. Each diſaſter that befalls him is real, permanent misfortune; every loſs he meets with is to him irreparable; every pain that corrodes him tends ſolely to deſtruction and diſſolution. The cup of ſorrow that is preſented to him is bitter; and no drop of comfort alleviates its bitterneſs. It is not wholeſome medicine, it is not health and life; it is pure pain and torment that he inhales from it. He ſuffers for no purpoſe but to ſuffer; is ſick, to no purpoſe but to languiſh under the burden of an extenuated and emaciated body; is poor and indigent, only to bear the load of poverty and indigence; meets a conſtant ſucceſſion of obſtacles and difficulties on his way, only that he may purſue it with cares and trouble; is wretched, only to immerge in miſery; dies, only to remain in death! How then can it be otherwiſe but that his ſufferings muſt oppreſs him, and how eaſily, how ſoon will they not entirely overwhelm him!

But what a totally different aſpect do they aſſume, when we are animated by the hope of immortality and a future ſtate of retribution! Now our afflic-

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tions are not ultimate ends, but only means to ſuperior views. Now we ſuffer, not for the purpoſe of ſuffering, but, by being exerciſed in ſufferings, to be corrected and rendered capable of greater perfection. Now no calamity overtakes us, that will not hereafter be to us a ſource of bleſſing; no misfortune that will not promote our benefit; no pain that may not be attended with joy. Now we loſe nothing for which we may not hope for compenſation or amends. Now every path of life, which God calls us to purſue, however clouded and rough, may and will conduct us to happineſs. Now no oppoſition, no danger, no diſappointments, no impediments and difficulties need ſurpriſe and affright us: ſince all this is conſiſtent with the ſtate of diſcipline and probation in which we live; and all this brings us nearer to our high deſtination. Now every affliction is ſweetened and alleviated by our proſpects in the better world. We may now even glory in tribulations; conſider and revere them as means to our perfection; give thanks for them as benefits to our heavenly father, and, from inward conviction, ſay with the apoſtle: "The ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in us!" "If we ſuffer with Jeſus, we ſhall alſo reign with him: if we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him!"

And when at length the hour of death draws nigh — and how ſhortly, how unexpectedly may it not arrive! — When therefore the hour of death draws

draws nigh, how important muſt the doctrine of our immortality and of a future ſtate of retribution be! To die, and have nothing before us but night, impenetrable, unterminating night; to die, and to loſe all our capacities, all our powers, all our goods and poſſeſſions, all our pleaſures and comforts entirely and for ever; to die, and to part for ever from our friends, and among them perhaps the faithful partner of all our cares and all our joys; to die, and to know that all we have done and borne and ſuffered, all our ſkill and knowledge, is to be entirely fruitleſs and unſerviceable; to die, and to meet total annihilation, and after a few ſhort hours or moments to be no more, and with all our hopes and proſpects to fall a victim to the grave: what a diſconſolate, horrible ſtate for a man who is ever ſo little capable of thought and ſentiment!

Oh happy we, my dear friends, thrice happy we, that Jeſus, by his reſurrection has deprived death of this terrific aſpect, that he has unveiled futurity to us, and brought life and immortality to light! Yes, it is the lofty, the divine faith of the chriſtian, the belief in immortality, and a better everlaſting life, that darts light into darkneſs, that brightens and cheers to us the valley of the ſhadow of death; that inſpires us with conſolation and hope and confidence, when we are abandoned by every other comfort and every hope ſeems folly. Fortified by thee, o holy faith, we may reſolutely meet this formidable adverſary, may boldly encounter and conquer his terrors,

and

and have nothing to fear from his threats. We hear our Saviour, the vanquiſher of death and the grave, calling to us: — I am the reſurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me ſhall never die. Death therefore is not in reality what it appears to be; not annihilation, not the end of my exiſtence, not the termination of my life and my activity, not the irreparable loſs of all that I am and have and can do. No, it is only a transformation, only the tranſition into a ſuperior ſtate, only the paſſage to greater perfection and happineſs. No, only my earthly tabernacle crumbles into duſt; my ſpirit returns to its creator and father, and expects life and bliſs in communion with him. No, the night that ſurrounds me in death will give way to an effulgent morn; the loſs of what is viſible and tranſitory brings me to the poſſeſſion of what is inviſible and eternal. My nobler intellectual faculties, my intrinſic excellence, death neither will nor can deſtroy; and neither death nor the grave will ſeparate me for ever from my friends, the beloved of my heart, with whom I was connected by wiſdom and virtue. No, I go to enter on a ſtate, whither all my good qualities and actions will attend me; where I ſhall better employ all my capacities and powers; where I ſhall ever do and enjoy more good; where I may and ſhall ever be and become, through the unending ages of eternity, more wiſe, more virtuous, more excellent and more happy!

And

And ſhall I anxiouſly tremble at the approach of death? Shall I heſitate to follow his ſummons, ſince he calls me to greater felicity? No, be his arrival to me the arrival of a harbinger of peace; his voice the voice of a friend, conducting me to my ſuperior deſtination and opening to me the paſſage into my true, my celeſtial country!

Of ſuch importance, my pious hearers, is the doctrine of our immortality and of a future ſtate of retribution, revealed by Jeſus and ſolemnly ratified by his reſurrection from the dead; of ſuch importance is it to our underſtanding and to our heart, of ſuch importance in the enjoyment of pleaſure and under the preſſure of afflictions, of ſuch importance while living and when dying! Ye chriſtians, who are come hither this day to ſolemnize in the holy ſupper the memorial of Jeſus, and all you who confeſs his name, oh be joyful in chriſtianity which has brought theſe doctrines to light and placed them beyond all doubt! Recognize, be ſenſible to its entire value, its benign influence on all your thoughts and judgments, views and hopes. Give thanks to God, give thanks to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, for the unclouded light that enlightens you, for the certainty that pacifies your minds on the moſt important ſubjects. Adhere firmly to theſe ſacred doctrines; make yourſelves continually more and more acquainted with them; let them be always preſent to your mind, let them be your conſtant companions and guides. Think, converſe, live uniformly as

perſons who are aſſured of their immortality, and expect everlaſting retributions.

Fortify yourſelves here at the table of the Lord in this bleſſed faith, in theſe pious and exalted diſpoſitions of mind. Elate with confidence and joy, we will mutually expreſs our emotions: We are immortal, we are journeying to a ſuperior, a better ſtate; as ſurely as Jeſus lived, ſo ſurely ſhall we alſo live, live through him and with him, eternally live, and in the communion of his life be eternally happy! Yes, we are immortal, everlaſting retributions await us: this ſentiment ſhall give more weight and dignity to all that we are and do, and cauſe us to think and act more nobly and more conſiſtently with our ſublime appointment. We are immortal, everlaſting retributions await us: this ſentiment ſhall exclude every ſordid affection from our heart, defend us from every temptation to ſin, and make us willing and accompliſhed to every good word, every generous act! We are immortal, a better, a ſuperior life awaits us: this ſentiment ſhall ſweeten every joy that God vouchſafes us, and alleviate and render tolerable every affliction he calls us to ſuffer! We are immortal, a better, an everlaſting life awaits us: accompanied by this conſoling thought, encouraged by this glorious proſpect, we will reſolutely travel the road that leads us to it, regardleſs of its troubles and inconveniences, unappalled ſee its end approach; and when we come, to-day or to-morrow, to ſtand on the verge of the grave,

grave, we ſhall not, like the infidel, ſtart and tremble, but, looking unto Jeſus, who is gone before us, and relying on his promiſes, with confidence and joy paſs over into the better, the everlaſting life! Amen.

Eaſter-day, 1782.

SERMON XXIV.

The Value, or the Importance, of the Hope of a bleſſed Immortality, conſidered as the principal Source of our Satisfaction and Serenity of Mind.

GOD, pure and perfect nature, greateſt and beſt of beings, inviſible indeed in thine eſſence but evident in thine effects! — Thou who art our father by having produced us out of nothing, and more eſpecially by having begotten us again to the hope of life in Chriſt Jeſus by his reſurrection from the dead — teach us, we implore thee, to pay all due reverence to thee, our creator and redeemer. That we may conceive juſtly, though imperfectly, of thy perfections, and expreſs humbly our ſenſe of them. Give us power to tranſcribe the imitable part of thy nature into our own. Incline us to look up to the complete pattern of thy beloved ſon, till we arrive at ſome faint reſemblance of the deity by aſpiring at the perfection of humanity. Give us the will to obey all thy commands, and to reſt ſatisfied in all thy diſpenſations; that we may with as much conſtancy,

ſtancy, cheerfulneſs and alacrity comply with the deſigns of thy providence on earth as the purer ſpirits do in heaven. Let us imitate their perfections here, that we may be made partakers of their happineſs hereafter. — Be pleaſed to give ſucceſs to all our honeſt endeavours to acquire the neceſſaries and conveniences of this life, and the wiſdom to diſcern that they ought never to be obtained by ſuch methods as are deſtructive of the more ſolid and permanent ſatisfactions of another. Look down with mercy and compaſſion upon all our failings, upon all our follies: and give us too ſuch tender diſpoſitions of mind, that we may exert a ſpirit of humanity and forbearance in all our dealings with our fellow-creatures. Teach us, by an habitual exerciſe of reaſon, to diſtinguiſh between the proper and perverſe uſe of the objects which ſurround us, that our paſſions may be kept in a due ſubſervience to the ends for which thou haſt implanted them. Suffer us not to be lulled into any ſinful ſecurity. If the ſtill ſmall voice of mercy cannot reach us, alarm us with the terrors of thy judgments: break the heart that will not bend; and lead us by any effort, however unwelcome or uneaſy, through that myſtery of iniquity which thou haſt permitted, into the glorious liberty of thy ſons, o God! — Pity, father, and pardon and aſſiſt our weak attempts to addreſs thee as we ought. Accept this humble act of duty and obedience. Indulge us kindly when we aſk aright, and deny us mercifully what we aſk amiſs.

And,

And, that we may be ſure to aſk ſuch things as ſhall pleaſe thee, give us leave to conclude our petitions in the name, words, and as far as we are able in the ſpirit of that beloved ſon in whom thou art well-pleaſed; referring the iſſue of all our hopes and aims ultimately to the direction of thy good pleaſure and providence. Even ſo, Lord, it is fit for us, weak and wretched as we are, to ſubmit all our deſires and views to the guidance of thy ſupreme controul, eternal, everlaſting king! enſhrined in glory which cannot be approached, inveſted with wiſdom and power which no arm can reſiſt, no tongue expreſs, no thought conceive. Our father, &c.

1 COR. XV. 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all men moſt miſerable.

QUIET and ſatisfaction being two leading objects of our deſire; and, as ſo much pains are taken to acquire them, it is the more to be lamented, that we do not with greater frequency and care make uſe of that principal ſource of true repoſe and ſatisfaction, the hope of a bleſſed immortality. If you attach your thoughts to this crumbling earth, my friends; if you confine your hopes to the ſhort moment of this terreſtrial life; if you take this ſtate of diſcipline and probation for the ultimate ſcope of

your being; if you look ſolely at the preſent and loſe ſight of the future: it is no wonder if you perceive diſorder, confuſion and miſery on all ſides around you; it is no wonder that you ſhould be tormented by doubt and ſolicitude, that you ſeek for the true calm and repoſe of your ſpirit in vain. Only ſoar above that which is viſible and tranſitory; do but raiſe yourſelf in thought to the future world; make yourſelf acquainted with the eternity that awaits us: and the greateſt part of the difficulties that perplex you will ſoon vaniſh away; you will perceive the wiſeſt arrangement, the moſt admirable beauty in the conſtitution of the univerſe and of your preſent ſtate; you will find ample cauſe for contentment in all circumſtances, and for bearing the troubles of this life with firmneſs and reſolution. The conſiderations with which I mean at preſent to ſupport your piety, will, I hope and truſt, by the divine aſſiſtance and bleſſing, furniſh you with more light and certainty on this matter.

I will repreſent to you the certain hope of a bleſſed immortality as the principal and pureſt ſource of tranquillity and ſatisfaction, and lay before your minds the ineſtimable value of the doctrines and promiſes delivered to us by the goſpel in regard to futurity. And how can I better execute this deſign than by contraſting the dark and melancholy life, and the diſmal end of a man without hope, with the bright and cheerful life and the comfortable end of a chriſtian, who, relying on the promiſes and believing

lieving in the reſurrection of our Saviour, is in expectation of a bleſſed immortality? Let us therefore draw a compariſon between theſe two claſſes of perſons, and accompany them through the principal ſcenes of their lives; we ſhall clearly perceive which of them has the advantage of the other. We ſhall find, that even in this reſpect we have ſufficient reaſon to exclaim, with the apoſtle in our text: If in this life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all men moſt miſerable.

To the man who knows nothing of futurity, who has no hope of immortality, all nature is a ſealed book, and he is the greateſt of all myſteries to himſelf. The deſign of his exiſtence is incomprehenſible to him; and of the purpoſes for which the other creatures that ſurround him were formed, and which ſo far exceed mankind in number, magnitude and beauty, he knows ſtill leſs. All he ſees and hears is to him an ænigma, to the ſolution whereof he can find no key. Imagine to yourſelves, my friends, a philoſopher, who knows nothing of the goſpel and from whom futurity is concealed, profoundly contemplating the heaven and the earth and himſelf, and that you hear him diſcourſe on theſe important objects in his comfortleſs ſolitude: what a doubtful, what a deſultory and diſconſolate language he holds! Methinks I hear him exclaim, in doleful accents, Why is the ſky ſo beautifully adorned, and to what end is this magnificence which nature ſo profuſely diſplays where-

ever I turn my view? What is the purpoſe of this grand, this immenſe and ingenious ſtructure? How gloomy, how painful to me is the ſight of it, ſo charming in itſelf, ſince I now perhaps for the laſt time enjoy it, and at all events ſhall ſhortly be deprived of thought and ſentiment for ever! Were I ſhut up in ſome dark and diſmal dungeon, had the day never ſhone upon my dwelling, my miſery had then been tolerable: but here, like a malefactor, I ſit impriſoned in a gorgeous palace, in which I can find nothing delightful, nothing agreeable, as expecting every moment the ſummons of death! — And what mean the faculties I feel within me? How am I benefited by the capacities I poſſeſs, but which I cannot employ? I behold many beauties, much magnificence, many aſtoniſhing effects. I am curious to inveſtigate and underſtand them. But they are all incomprehenſible to me: it is too high for me, I cannot attain unto it. My abilities fail me, and the light itſelf is darkneſs about me. — It is true, nature is beautiful; ſhe is pleaſant and charming; ſhe invites my ſenſes to abundance of ſatisfaction and delight. But why then am I ſo reſtleſs and uneaſy? Why cannot all theſe benefits and beauties ſatisfy my mind? Whence proceeds the want which I feel amidſt ſuch plenty, and the ſentiment of which ſo often diſturbs my livelieſt pleaſure and always renders it imperfect? Why are my deſires never fulfilled? Wherefore can I never ceaſe from wiſhing?

Whence

Whence comes the diſguſt that ſo quickly ſucceeds to enjoyment, and in an inſtant deprives what I earneſtly longed for before of all its worth? Has the creator then called me out of nothing for my puniſhment? Has he given me ſuch capacities, ſuch appetites, for the augmentation of my miſery? To what purpoſe ſuch great preparatives for the few and precarious moments of life? — Thus does the hopeleſs mortal bewilder himſelf in reflection. He finds himſelf placed in a garden of delights; but it is all a gloomy labyrinth to him, to him it loſes every charm from his want of a clue to guide him through it.

Before the chriſtian on the other hand who expects immortality and an everlaſting life to come, theſe doubts and horrors are removed, this darkneſs diſpelled, theſe difficulties vaniſh away. He ſees that it is a wiſe and bountiful God, who has placed him on the globe of the earth. He diſcovers the principal ſcope of things, and ſets his mind at reſt; he has ſuch views of deity as fill the heart with conſolation and joy. The hope of futurity diffuſes a luſtre on all the beautiful and grand which he ſees in the world; the nature of man is to him unfolded, and life and immortality brought to light. The view of the boundleſs creation, that utterly perplexed and confounded yon hapleſs mortal, inſpires the chriſtian with ſerenity and ſatisfaction. Elate with gratitude and admiration, he adores the great Father of all, and exclaims with

the Pſalmiſt in a holy tranſport: "Lord, how glorious are thy works; in wiſdom haſt thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches!" Here I perceive eternal work: here is matter for inceſſant diſcoveries; here I behold ſources of knowledge and joy, whence rational beings may draw for ever, without any fear of their failing. How gloomy to me would be the contemplation of beautiful nature, how ſad the ſentiment of my powers, how troubleſome and importunate my curioſity, how fertile in vexation my infinite deſires, if I had to dread, in a few moments, the utter extinction of knowledge and enjoyment! But thou haſt appointed me, o God, to life, to a life that ſhall know no end. At preſent my capacities are too great to exhibit themſelves in all their ſtrength. The body of death ſurrounds me, and contracts the workings of my mind. But ſoon ſhall I be freed from theſe incumbrances. My ſoul will ſoar aloft, and aſcend to the realms of light. She will riſe at the reſurrection of the juſt, united to a glorious, a ſpiritual, an incorruptible body. Then, o God, then ſhall I firſt behold thy works in all their grandeur, in all their magnificence and beauty; then ſhall I be for ever employed in the inveſtigation of them, and never be weary of admiring thy wiſdom and power; then will all my appetites be ſatisfied and all my wiſhes accompliſhed. This is not the place of my final deſtination. It is but preparatory to a far better and more glorious ſtate.

Here

Here it is my buſineſs by generous occupations to begin to qualify myſelf for the more refined ſatiſfactions which await me in that world, and even what I call troubleſome and imperfect in my preſent condition muſt, if I but properly apply it, promote my future perfection. Thus does the chriſtian unravel the deſign of his being and the tendency of his powers; and thus does he diſſipate the darkneſs that ſurrounds him on earth, by the light of revelation, which diſcloſes to his view the faireſt proſpects in eternity.

Knowledge and virtue are even in themſelves and without regard to futurity the main ſupports and the moſt exuberant ſources of our happineſs. How without knowledge ſhould we ſatisfy the curioſity of our minds? How without virtue ſhould we tranquilize our hearts? How ſhould we moderate and ſettle in a rational equilibrium our contending paſſions, if we were deſtitute of knowledge and virtue? Let us next compare the mortal without hope with the chriſtian that expects eternity, and ſee which of them has the ampleſt means and the ſtrongeſt encouragements, to build his happineſs on this foundation and to render his life pleaſant by knowledge and virtue. We will here allow them both to ſpeak their natural ſentiments, and thence it will plainly appear which of them has the advantage of the other. It is true, knowledge is ornamental to the mind; thus ſpeaks the man whoſe hopes are confined to this life. I experience,

that what thinks within me is capable of ſoaring above viſible objects, and of piercing into the combination of things. I feel a great pleaſure whenever I can increaſe my perceptions and diſcover the traces of the wiſe author of nature. But how fooliſh and unprofitable is this my employment! Wiſdom cannot be acquired without much toil. Truth never appears to her votaries till after many ſucceſsleſs reſearches; for one truth a hundred miſtakes are poſſible. We muſt dedicate both our days and our nights to the ſtudy of the latent operations of nature, ere we can acquire but a ſlight knowledge of her ſecrets. Mean time, the mind wears out: its powers diminiſh; the body is weakened by its ſtrenuous exertions, and I become daily leſs capable of reliſhing the pleaſures of ſenſe. And what is at length the reſult of all theſe efforts? When a few moments are paſt I ſhall be no more, and my laboriouſly acquired knowledge will likewiſe be no more. That which thinks in me, and often fondly ſoars above the clouds, will in a few days be loſt to exiſtence. The great diſcoveries I am ſtriving to make will vaniſh into thin air, and my lofty imaginations, my ſublime ideas, will be enveloped in the ſhades of everlaſting night. Such is the language of the man who has no views beyond the grave. His endeavour after knowledge muſt neceſſarily appear ridiculous to himſelf; and he has little or nothing to encourage him in the proſecution of it.

No

No leſs feeble are his motives to virtue, and his purpoſe to follow her precepts will as eaſily fail. He withers like a flower that ſprings up in a parched ſoil or ſtoney ground. Though great the native beauty of virtue, yet it is not ſufficient to render the man who looks upon death as the period of his being conſtant in the love and in the practice of it. Self-intereſt and the hope of advantage are the principal motives to human action. Few men however are ſo enlightened as to perceive the combination of virtue with ſelf-love and with our real intereſts. It coſts us labour and toil, my friends, before we can arrive at a certain aptitude in good. We have many obſtacles to ſurmount and many difficulties to conquer, in order to fulfil our duties with exactitude and behave in all circumſtances as befits a true chriſtian. Riches and honours and days of eaſe, are not always the companions of integrity. How often on the contrary is it attended by poverty and ſcorn! Nay, is it any thing uncommon for the brighteſt virtue to be a butt to the ſhafts of malice and to be perſecuted with fury? And yet it is impoſſible, without virtue, to acquire true peace of mind and to be happy. Vice on the other hand frequently poſſeſſes attractions: ſhe holds out to her followers power and authority, opulence and reſpect; ſhe promiſes them abundance of pleaſure. And yet vice renders us unhappy, and while we remain her vaſſals it is impoſſible for us to be calm and contented.

tented. Therefore, that we may flee from vice; that we may be enamoured of virtue; that we may thus live contented and happy: we muſt have ſome cogent motives to do ſo. But do ye imagine, my friends, that any one, who has no puniſhment to fear in futurity and no reward to expect, is in a capacity to vanquiſh all temptations to evil, and devote himſelf to the ſervice of inſulted virtue with her extremely mean appearance? Certainly not. Her beauty might probably attract him; he might even reſolve to follow her precepts: but how long would his reſolution laſt? The firſt violent temptation would put it to flight. Were he frankly to explain himſelf, it is thus he would ſpeak: What will it profit me if I earneſtly ſtrive to be virtuous? What avails this unremitted attention to all my thoughts, my deſires and actions? Theſe violent conflicts with my propenſities and paſſions? How difficult it is to conquer oneſelf! And what benefit, what fruit, have I at laſt to expect from the victory? My probity will be taken for affectation, my piety will be imputed to melancholy; and I ſhall ſit ſolitary in the duſt, while others, of laxer principles, are lolling in the ſeats of honour! What have I to provide for but my body and my temporal affairs? Why ſhould I quarrel with the amuſements and delights that ſo many others enjoy who blindly follow their animal inſtincts? Shall I embitter my life by the reſtrictions of temperance, and for the ſake of an imaginary pleaſure of the mind,

mind, deny myſelf the more ſure and ſubſtantial pleaſures of ſenſe? I have nothing to fear or to hope after death! So ſpeaks the hopeleſs mortal: thus will his virtuous reſolutions be undermined. Thus he allows himſelf to be hurried away by the luſts of the fleſh; and diſcontent and vexation, apprehenſion, anxiety, in ſhort all the diſaſtrous conſequences of vice at once take poſſeſſion of his heart. For want of hope he neglects the principal and pureſt ſources of earthly happineſs and is always becoming more unhappy than he was.

Quite otherwiſe it is with the chriſtian, who expects immortality. He is daily endeavouring to augment his knowledge and to improve in virtue, and thus is daily promoting his real happineſs. He can never be deficient in encouragement to conſtancy and zeal in theſe generous efforts; and the futurity which is ever in his view, renders all he undertakes in this reſpect not only eaſy but pleaſant. How agreeable, thinks he, how pleaſant to me are meditations on the perfections of my God and father, the greateſt and beſt of beings! What pure ſatisfaction pervades my ſoul, when I watch his ways and admire his works! How it elevates my mind when I perceive the wiſdom of the creator in his creatures, and trace out the marks of his greatneſs! How reviving are my meditations on my divine redeemer and his conſolatory office! My knowledge indeed in all reſpects is extremely defective and ſlender; but this ſhall not diſhearten-

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me from continually labouring with renovated ardour at the extenſion and improvement of it. In the matters of moſt importance I have revelation for my guide, and am ſafe from all deception. By that I perceive an eternity approaching. The real knowledge which I here collect, is out of the power of that ſpoiler death. Hereafter in the world of ſpirits I ſhall purſue my reſearches; what is falſe will evaporate from my attainments, and what is ſolid and juſt will form the baſis of my higher perfection. Thus does the hope of futurity animate the chriſtian; and the pleaſure he procures from the contemplation of religion and nature will be always increaſing, ſince he has no need to fear it will ever be loſt.

The ſame influence, my friends, has hope upon his virtue, as the other ſource of human happineſs. It renders him inflexible againſt every temptation to iniquity; and he renounces all with joy when he thinks on the future world. How eaſy, how bleſſed, he exclaims, is the ſervice of my God, and how gracious is the maſter whom I ſerve, as ſo richly to requite my feeble endeavours in goodneſs, even to reward them for ever! No, my ſincere aſſiduity to pleaſe him is not in vain. Godlineſs has the promiſes of this life and of that which is to come. The Lord commands me to believe that he is the rewarder of them that ſeek him. Coſt what it will to gain the victory over myſelf, what glorious conſequences attend the triumphs I ſhall ob-

tain! Whoever, through the ſpirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, ſhall live, he ſhall live for ever, his works ſhall follow him, and he will enjoy the fruit of his labour. Virtue even at preſent affords me the ſincereſt pleaſure, and of this pleaſure it is out of the power of death to rob me; it will for ever continue and for ever increaſe. And ſhall I allow myſelf to be diverted from the path of rectitude and make ſhipwreck of my future happineſs, for riches, for worldly honours, for ſenſual gratifications, for trifles light as air? No, rather "forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." Such, my friends, are the reflections of the chriſtian, in expectation of a bleſſed immortality. Though knowledge and virtue be a grievous burden to him who is deſtitute of hope, yet are they the ſources of the moſt refined and exalted joys to the man that is ſure of eternal life.

To proceed in our compariſon of the hopeleſs mortal with the chriſtian expecting everlaſting happineſs in the belief of the riſen Saviour. Let us thirdly contraſt their ſentiments and demeanour in the day of adverſity. How hard misfortunes bear on him who knows no other and no better life than this! So long as riches and honours and worldly joys go with him hand in hand, he may conceal his wretchedneſs and his lamentable ſtate from

from himſelf. The dazzling glare of terreſtrial proſperity offuſcates his mind and hinders him from ſtedfaſtly turning inward the intellectual eye, and from feeling acutely the want of hope. But he is now haraſſed with diſappointments and troubles. The faſcinating charms of honour and reſpect that environed him vaniſh away: the furious tranſports, that for ſome moments prevented him from viewing his diſmal proſpects in futurity, are come to an end. He is now thrown back upon himſelf. He now ſees clearly the emptineſs and vanity of all that is viſible and earthly: he now experiences how incompetent the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it is to the contentment of his infinite deſires. Where ſhall he now find reſt? Where will he look for conſolation and joy? Unacquainted as he is with the comfort which religion and the hope of immortality afford us, it is impoſſible for him to be completely at reſt. His whole ground of conſolation conſiſts in theſe unavailing ideas: It is thus with me; and all my lamentations cannot alter my fate. And what now will be the effect of theſe ideas? Will the afflictions he ſuffers be thus deprived of their diſagreeable and noxious qualities? Will this cauſe them to abandon the attack? Will he learn to conſider and uſe them as means to a ſuperior kind of happineſs? No, the utmoſt they can do for him will be to ſink him into a certain inſenſibility, into a ſtate alike devoid of pleaſure and of pain; and even this inſenſibility may be diſturbed by the

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ſtarting up of any lively thought and be converted into the moſt griding pain. Thus the mortal, who has nothing to hope for beyond the grave, ſuſtains the entire preſſure of misfortune, without any means of alleviating his burden. If he loſe his outward diſtinctions or his treaſures, he loſes his all; he has nothing by which to retrieve his loſs. The ſources of his happineſs are ſtopped; how then can the enjoyment of it continue? If his friends die before him, he imagines that he is bereft of them for ever: his loſs is irreparable; and it is not to be wondered at, if an incurable ſorrow takes poſſeſſion of his ſoul and he gives himſelf up to deſpair.

Conſider on the other hand the chriſtian in misfortune, and ſee how patient, how firm, how cheerful the hope of hereafter makes him! Indeed he likewiſe feels calamity when it comes upon him like an armed man, and it frequently forces him to ſhed bitter tears: he tenderly bemoans the loſs of his friend; it hurts him when he is unjuſtly deprived of his honour, and he is obliged to ſubmit to the cruel effects of contempt: it affects him when he is deſpoiled of his property, and thereby is cut off from the pleaſure of generouſly affording relief: it gives him concern when he is prevented, by bodily infirmities or pains, from being ſerviceable to his neighbour and of uſe to the world; it wounds him to the quick when he ſees virtue deſpiſed, and the nobleſt actions go unrewarded, or perhaps

perhaps repaid with injuries. He does not on that account however ceaſe to be happy. He has learned from the doctrines of religion how to moderate his grief, and to procure himſelf comfort in the greateſt misfortunes. Is he ſcorned and perſecuted for his godlineſs and piety; he rejoices in this, that he ſuffers with Chriſt, as he knows that he ſhall alſo reign with him hereafter, and that "the light afflictions of this preſent time are not to be compared with the glory that ſhall hereafter be revealed in us." Does he loſe his temporal poſſeſſions, he is aſſured, that no man can take from him the teſtimony of a good conſcience, the pleaſure of virtue and the grace of his God. He deſpiſes the diſtinctions and treaſures of the world, and fixes his view on the great reward which the righteous judge ſhall give him at that day. And ſhould the injuſtice of mankind compel him to abandon his country and to wander, a vagabond on the earth; even this likewiſe he has learned how to render ſupportable. He looks up to a city whoſe builder and maker is God; he diſregards whatever is viſible, but directs his attention to the things that are not ſeen, and his converſation is in heaven. Is he bereaved of his friends by remorſeleſs death, or does ſome ſecret diſpenſation remove him far from thoſe whom his ſoul holds dear; the expectation of hereafter can even mitigate theſe bittereſt of ſorrows. No diſtance, no ſeparation, no death, can part him for ever from the friend of his heart. He ſhall find

him

him again in the kingdom of the juſt: he will there renew the bonds of amity with him, and in that glorified ſtate nothing can diſturb their generous and virtuous friendſhip. Thus, my friends, the hope of the chriſtian can never be put to confuſion. It alleviates to him every calamity, which overwhelms the hopeleſs and plunges them in utter deſpair.

Let us laſtly, my friends, approach the death-beds of theſe two perſons, and conſider their different exits from the world. Behold the unhappy man who feels himſelf dying, and yet is totally deſtitute of all hope of another and better life. See how anxiety and affright diſtort his viſage, how he wrings his hands in conſternation and diſtreſs, what deſponding looks he caſts on the perſons around him! Death appears to him in his moſt tremendous form, he is to him a king of terrors, and he has no armour againſt this foe, nothing whence he can derive comfort in this moſt critical moment. He ſees himſelf crumbling to duſt, he ſees the grave and corruption before him, and dares not hope that from this priſon he ſhall ever be ranſomed. The thought of his annihilation ſtrikes a chillneſs through his ſoul, and fills it with inſuperable diſmay. Then the illuſion vaniſhes that was ſpread upon all earthly things; then the paſt riſes up, often riſes in bitter remembrance; then the future ruſhes upon his view in all its dark and unknown terrors; then the ſenſe of deity revives, which

however diſguiſed lies at the bottom of every heart. He now for the laſt time beholds the orb of day, the all-reviving ſun, and expects the ſhadows of the everlaſting night. His friends take leave of him for ever, and their delightful converſe, as he thinks, will never cheer him again. He muſt quit all things, without hope of compenſation again! — Can you figure to yourſelves a more deplorable condition than this?

On the other hand behold the chriſtian, who, believing in the riſen Saviour, looks for a bleſſed immortality. How edifying are his laſt moments, and how calmly he meets death and eternity! Death is to him a meſſenger of peace; he announces to him deliverance and freedom; he conducts him to life, to a far better and completer life than the preſent. Why ſhould he not willingly follow his call? Why ſhould he not readily exchange this life for the other? He loſes nothing that will not be reſtored to him or infinitely overbalanced. He has already a foretaſte of the joys that await him; and the nearer his end approaches, his countenance brightens, and his ſoul is more cheered. He haſtens to the place of his deſtination with a holy impatience, and may addreſs his ſorrowing friends with comfortable aſſurance: Weep not for me, o my friends, I ſhall ſoon embrace you in another life; continue to truſt in your great Redeemer! Thus full of hope dies the chriſtian, and enters into the joy of his Lord.

Such,

Such, pious hearers, ſuch is the extreme difference between the hopeleſs mortal and the chriſtian that expects a bleſſed eternity. Such are the incomparable advantages the one poſſeſſes over the other. To the former all nature is an unfathomable myſtery, and the purport of his own exiſtence he cannot diſcover: the latter knows to what he is ordained, and the creation is to him the mirror of the perfections of its author. Knowledge and virtue, the ſources of our happineſs, are ſhut againſt the one, and he has little or nothing to induce him to apply to them for repoſe: to the other, to the chriſtian, theſe ſources of ſatisfaction ſtand conſtantly open; and in the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue he finds the moſt permanent joy. The former ſinks under the weight of misfortune: the latter rejoices even in tribulations, and no accident can diveſt him of his happineſs. The former loſes all courage in death, and ſhudders at the approach of his diſſolution: the latter, the juſt man, has even hope in his death, and firſt begins properly to live, when he ſeems to be dying. Muſt you not confeſs then, my friends, that as chriſtians we poſſeſs infinite advantages over the infidel? Muſt you not allow with the apoſtle in our text, that we ſhould be the moſt miſerable of mankind, if our hopes were confined to this life, if after it we had no other, no better to expect? How many reaſons therefore have we to extol and commemorate our riſen re-

deemer, who by his doctrine has brought life and undecaying exiſtence to light? How can we be grateful enough to him for the victory he has obtained over death and the grave, for the glorious revelation he has given us of futurity! Does not ſuch a teacher, ſuch a benefactor, merit all our veneration? Does he not merit our entire reliance, our moſt willing obedience? What groveling ſentiments ſhall we not betray, how much ſhould we abhor ourſelves if we deſpiſed the goſpel of the ſon of God, if we undervalued his promiſes and rejected the felicity to which we are called? No, no, my beloved, we have the happineſs of being chriſtians: we have the hope of everlaſting life. Let us prize this happineſs as it deſerves; let us walk worthy of this hope. Let us pour out our ſouls in one united ſong of praiſe to our glorified Redeemer, who has delivered us from the dread of annihilation, and given us the aſſurance of life eternal. But let us alſo ſhew by our whole deportment what lofty expectations we entertain. How ill would it become us, chriſtians, to ſeek our reſt, our ſatisfaction, our happineſs, in the things of this world, ſince we are deſigned for eternity! How ill would it become us, to be inconſolable at the loſs of our earthly poſſeſſions, or of our deareſt friends, like heathens who are deſtitute of hope! How irrationally ſhould we act, were we only to provide for the body, to the neglect of our ſoul! How bitterly ſhall we hereafter lament our fooliſh choice,

choice, if we prefer the hard bondage of vice to the eaſy ſervice of virtue, and for it loſe the refined ſatisfactions and the eternal felicities of heaven! Oh animate then yourſelves to a generous and holy conduct, ye chriſtians, created and redeemed to immortal life! Set looſe your hearts from all that is evaneſcent and earthly. Never attach your affections and views to the objects that lie on this ſide the grave. Tranſport yourſelves by frequent meditation into the realms of eternal day; endeavour to acquire and to maintain a heavenly frame of mind, and let your whole behaviour be regulated by the future world. Evince in all things, even in the moſt calamitous events of life, that you are chriſtians, who look not ſo much at the things that are ſeen, as on thoſe that are not ſeen. Do honour to the religion you profeſs, by a ſteady and cheerful virtue, and take faſt hold on the hope that is given you by Chriſt. It will not abandon you, even in death; and you will enter rejoicing into the kingdom of your God.

Eaſter-Day.

SERMON XXV.

Of Spiritual Experiences.

GOD, our gracious father, that thou haſt called us to chriſtianity is a boon for which we can never ſufficiently thank thee! A boon, which in regard to knowledge and morals, to means of improvement and peace of mind yields us the greateſt advantages over the reſt of the inhabitants of the earth! A privilege which might and would afford us as great advantages over them in regard to wiſdom, to virtue, to real felicity, if we employed it aright! But of this not all of us, — alas, perhaps only few of us, can boaſt. No, chriſtianity is certainly not to us what it might and ought to be! No, we are not yet become by it ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo cheerful and happy, as we might! Here in thy preſence we confeſs and feel it, o merciful father; we ſtand aſhamed before thee of our ingratitude and our negligence; we now wiſh to become better chriſtians, and to experience more of the bleſſed efficacy of the chriſtian religion. Oh

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let this confeſſion, this ſentiment, this remorſe be truly ſalutary to us and our wiſhes be actually accompliſhed. Teach us to underſtand chriſtianity in its true nature and deſign, may it be thoroughly important to us, may we open every avenue of our hearts to its divine, efficacious influence, to its all-quickening ſpirit, and may it dwell and govern in us, and reform us into ſuch perſons as are chriſtians indeed and in truth! Bleſs to that end the diſcourſe of thy ſervant! Let his remonſtrances find acceptance, adhere deeply in our minds, and there effect much good and happineſs! We pray thee for it as thy children and as the followers of thy ſon Jeſus, addreſſing thee further, in filial confidence, as he preſcribed: Our father, &c.

JOHN, vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.

THERE are three methods of arriving at the knowledge of truth: reaſon, faith, and experience. Reaſon in her inquiries lays down certain general propoſitions, received of all men and abſolutely irrefragable, as her ground-work; ſhe connects and compares known truths together and thence by a ſeries of juſt inferences, derives others, which were either not at all or not with ſufficient

preciſion known to her before; ſhe aſcends to the firſt principles of things, and thence demonſtrates and explains them. Faith reſts on the teſtimony of others: ſhe examines the accounts that are given of a fact and the credibility of the witneſſes by whom they are reported; ſhe compares the ſeveral parts of the hiſtory together and with the circumſtances wherein they are ſaid to have happened; and whenever ſhe finds a competent capacity and integrity in the witneſſes, and a correſpondence in their narratives, ſhe ſtamps it with her approbation. Experience laſtly inſtructs us concerning objects that fall under our ſenſes, or the impreſſion and effects they produce on our eyes, our ears, or the other organs of ſenſe; ſhe gives us alſo to obſerve the inward motions and alterations that ariſe either in our mind or body, and thus teaches us to form a judgment both of our natural and our ſpiritual or moral ſtate. Would we then render our knowledge as perfect as we may, we muſt adopt all theſe three different methods for knowing the truth and for being ſure of it. This is proper and neceſſary, not only in regard to human knowledge, but likewiſe in regard to religion. We ſhould endeavour to obtain, not only an hiſtorical, but alſo a rational and experimental knowledge of every truth, as far as its nature and our ſituation will allow. The more numerous the evidences we have of any fact, the greater will our certainty of it be, and the more completely ſhall we be ſatisfied about it.

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There are indeed doctrines in religion, which we can only know through faith; and the truth of them in reſpect of us reſts ſolely on hiſtorical narrative. But others, and thoſe the greateſt number, are of ſuch a nature, that they are likewiſe to be known by reaſon and experience; and, in ſuch caſes, we may very advantageouſly blend theſe ſeveral ways for arriving at the truth. Revealed religion is chiefly founded on the narratives and the teſtimony of perſons who lived many ages before our times. Theſe perſons relate to us, in their writings, the lamentable conſequences with which ſin was attended on the condition of mankind, and the wiſe arrangements eſtabliſhed by God for the correction and reſtoration of it; they diſcover to us the counſels and determinations of the Moſt High; they inform us of the ſervice which God requires of us, and of the conditions we muſt fulfil, if we would partake of his favour and be happy for ever. Theſe narratives are by far too important, to be received and adopted by us without examining the authority on which they ſtand. We ſhould therefore diſcuſs the characters and the credibility of the narrators on whoſe authority they depend, and thus endeavour to gain a certainty of their truth. Thus ſhall we arrive by the firſt method at knowledge and certainty; thus will faith ariſe in us. But our knowledge may be ſtill more perfect; it may be brought to a higher degree of evidence and certainty, if we purſue the other way, and conſult reaſon. Though reaſon might

might not have diſcovered the doctrines of revealed religion by her own penetration, yet may ſhe pronounce upon them after having been once informed of them. She may deduce many of them from the firſt principles of human knowledge; ſhe may ſhew us their various and cloſe connection with other truths already known; ſhe may reconcile the ſeeming contradictions between them; ſhe may preſent us with new evidence in behalf of their truth; in ſhort ſhe may draw many uſeful and important reſults from them. Her concurrence makes theſe doctrines the more acceptable, and our certainty of them muſt be ſo much the greater. But even here we are not to ſtop. Even in regard to religion we ſhould adopt the mode of experience; we ſhould endeavour to become certain of its truth and excellency by our own ſenſations. On this experimental knowledge of religion all indeed depends; ſince nothing can ſupply the want of it, and becauſe all the other kinds of knowledge, unleſs they are connected with this, are incapable of ſaving us. We muſt however be extremely cautious on this head, leſt we deceive ourſelves, and ſtrike into ſuch paths as are very dangerous both to ourſelves and others.

That I may warn you of this wrong courſe, my friends, I have determined to treat ſomewhat circumſtantially this ſubject, which has ſo great an influence on our tranquillity and happineſs, and to ſet it in as clear a point of view as the ſhort time allowed to theſe diſcourſes will permit. The words of

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our ſaviour, which I have now read to you, preſent us with a fit occaſion for theſe reflections. He ſays: "If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf." What can he mean hereby but this: If you ſuffer the doctrine which I deliver to you in behalf of God, to have its due effect upon you; if you follow my precepts and reduce them to practice, you will infallibly feel their divine efficacy; you will thereby be corrected, ſanctified, tranquillized; you will perceive by experience, that my doctrine has a celeſtial origin; that I do not addreſs you as a human teacher, but as the ambaſſador of God Supreme. Our redeemer therefore in theſe terms declares, that we may acquire an experimental knowledge of the truth of religion, and that it is an excellent means of being fully aſſured of it.

Let us now inveſtigate the nature and quality of theſe ſpiritual experiences, and at the ſame time remark the principal rules to be obſerved in judging of them, in order to preſerve us from the ordinary miſtakes.

The term ſpiritual experience is generally uſed in a very indefinite ſenſe, and they who boaſt the moſt about it have frequently the moſt obſcure and erroneous conception of it. They give this appellation to any rather lively ſenſation, any extraordinary agitation of the blood, without firſt examining whence theſe feelings and agitations ariſe. They perpetually confound the imagination and experience together, and

and often look upon the moſt natural alterations in their body and mind as ſomething extraordinary and ſupernatural. When they are deſired to explain their experiences, or to ſhew whence they ariſe, they evade the queſtion by declaring the whole of the matter to be incomprehenſible. But were they at the pains to inquire a little into their own nature, and inform themſelves ſomewhat of the manner in which the mind acts upon the body and the body upon the mind: many of the incomprehenſibilities, at which themſelves and others are aſtoniſhed, would fall to the ground, and they would obtain a complete ſolution of what they at preſent regard as an inexplicable myſtery. When we ſpeak of experiences in common life, every one who underſtands the language knows what we mean: we mean nothing elſe than that we feel the effects of particular things, and are conſcious of it. Thus we experience for example, the force of the ſun, the temperature of the atmoſphere, the violence of the wind, and the like: that is, we feel the effects that theſe things have upon us, the alterations they produce in our bodies, and we are conſcious of it. Apply this now to ſpiritual experiences, and you will have a plain and juſt comprehenſion of them. What are they but the feelings of the good effects religion has upon us, of the happy changes it works in our ſentiments, judgments, affections, actions and pleaſures? This idea is perſpicuous. It coincides with the nature of our mind; and we need only attend

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to what we call ſpiritual experiences, for finding that they are no otherwiſe to be deſcribed. I will explain myſelf farther. The doctrines of religion have not only an enlightening, but alſo an affecting and perſuaſive efficacy. They are adapted not only to rectify our underſtanding, but alſo to regulate our will. They are adapted to purify our hearts, to determine our appetites and aims, and move us to good and virtuous reſolutions. If then they produce in us ſuch effects, our knowledge is lively, or, which is the ſame thing, we get an experimental knowledge of the power and efficacy of the doctrines of religion. A few examples may beſt ſerve to illuſtrate this. A devout chriſtian conſiders the gracious diſpoſitions of God towards ſinners; he traces in ſilent attention, the wiſe and benign methods which the Moſt High has adopted for reclaiming and reſtoring the human race; he admires the greatneſs of the love diſplayed in our behalf: he makes the application of it to himſelf. "Me likewiſe, unworthy as I am," ſays he, "even me hath God loved; even on me has he ſhed his compaſſions!" Theſe thoughts affect him, and fill his heart with a ſincere reciprocity of love to his infinite benefactor. He has therefore an experimental knowledge of the force of what religion teaches us concerning the love of God. And how? He feels the good effects that idea has upon him, and is thereby moved to pious reſolutions. So is it likewiſe with other doctrines of religion. When

the conſideration of the indecency, the loathſomeneſs, the pernicious conſequences of ſin, and God's exceeding great diſpleaſure towards it, creates in us an actual abhorrence of all kinds of vice; when the conſideration of the beauty and amiableneſs of virtue, the reaſonableneſs and excellence of the law of God and Chriſt, and the great obligations we are under to our creator and deliverer, inſpires us with a predominant inclination to univerſal goodneſs; we then experience the ſanctifying efficacy of theſe doctrines. When the conſideration of the wiſdom, the omnipotence and benignity of the Almighty, the idea of his holy and irreproachable government, and his watchful care over the good; when reflections on the nature and deſign of our preſent ſtate and its connection with the future eternity, alleviate our diſtreſſes, tranquillize our heart, render us firm and courageous in misfortune, and teach us to truſt in the help of the Lord: we have an agreeable experience of the efficacy of theſe motives to conſolation; we feel what a powerful aid religion affords to mankind in afflictions. Spiritual experiences conſequently are in general nothing more than the conſciouſneſs of the ſalutary effects which the maxims, the rules of conduct, the affecting and conſoling arguments of religion produce in us. Theſe effects however ariſe from two different cauſes: one being the proper and peculiar force of religion, the other the eſpecial aſſiſtance of the ſpirit of God.

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The doctrines of religion have in themſelves a natural power to move and to convince all thoſe that embrace them, and to direct their conduct this way or that. This power they have in common with all other truths. No ſooner have we obtained a plain, juſt, vivid and certain knowledge of ſome important truth, but immediately it has likewiſe a ſtronger or weaker degree of influence on our heart, producing in us either joy or ſorrow, hope or fear, pleaſure or diſpleaſure, and impelling us to act agreeably to the perceptions we have gained. Now, as the doctrines of religion are in their nature much grander, much more ſublime and important than all others; as they ſtand in the cloſeſt connection with our preſent and future happineſs; as they ground their authority on a revelation from heaven: they muſt neceſſarily have a greater power to act upon the will, and it is impoſſible for us to behold them with a certain degree of perſpicuity and vivacity, and to apply them home, without feeling that they have an effect upon our appetites and deteſtations, our inclinations and averſions, without being moved to reduce our knowledge to practice, and to make it the general rule of our deportment.

This natural efficacy of the doctrines of religion, is however enhanced by the eſpecial ſupport which God will grant us to our moral improvement and to the performance of our duties. Holy ſcripture informs us, that God frequently operates in a remarkable manner on the hearts of mankind, ſometimes

times injecting into the ſoul bleſſed impulſes to duty, and powerful avocations from ſin; or, by the methods of his providence putting them in ſuch a frame, that truth can diſplay itſelf to them in its full force. This happens principally at the beginning of converſion. Then the ſpirit of the Lord by his word, by certain favourable circumſtances in which the perſon is placed, or in ſome other way unknown to us, removes the deeply rooted prejudices of the ſinner againſt his ſervice and againſt true devotion, and thus takes away the obſtacles which had hitherto withheld him from the love of truth and from obedience to it. We may comfort ourſelves likewiſe in other important circumſtances, which we cannot however accurately define, of the particular aid of the ſupreme being, and we may in general believe, that the ſpirit of God will aſſiſt every ſincere chriſtian in a more extraordinary manner, whenever the ordinary means of ſalvation ſhould not be ſufficient to ſupport his doubtful faith, or his conflicting virtue.

Since therefore our natural capacities as well as the peculiar force of the doctrins of religion, and the eſpecial operations of the holy ſpirit concur to produce in us what we call ſpiritual experiences: we are not to wonder that we are often deceived when we would aſcertain the peculiar cauſe of theſe or the other emotions and alterations that ariſe within us. We neither underſtand the operations of our mind nor the manner of God's proceedings ſo thoroughly,

ly, as in all cafes to be able properly to diſtinguiſh and clearly to explain them. We ſhall however avoid numberleſs miſtakes, we ſhall rightly judge of our moral ſtate, and uncommonly facilitate the practice of religion, if we obſerve the remarks and precepts which I have now to lay before you.

In the firſt place we are not to take all the good emotions that ariſe within us, for ſpecial operations of the holy ſpirit. God is indeed all in all. To his influence all creatures are beholden for the continuance of their exiſtence and their lives. His providence extends no leſs over minds than over bodies. He ſupports our intellectual faculties by his mighty will; he elevates and ſtrengthens them when and how he pleaſes. On him we entirely depend, and without him we can do nothing. But God acts not immediately, where the ordinary means are ſufficient; he performs no miracle without a weighty cauſe. He deals with us as with rational beings: he will have us to uſe the capacities he has given us; not treating us as machines, which require continually to be jogged on, or to be wound up for reaching their proper effect. He therefore that takes every livelier ſentiment, every acuter feeling ariſing from meditation on important truths in a ſuſceptible mind, for the conſequences of an immediately divine influence, thereby plainly declares that he underſtands not the nature of the human ſoul, that he is accuſtomed to make incomprehenſible myſteries of things that are deducible from natural cauſes, and

that he is infected by fanatical principles. We ſhould indeed, as I have already remarked, attribute all that we think or do to God, as the father of lights, from whom all good gifts originally proceed; but we do no honour to the holy ſpirit, we render our piety ſuſpected, and make religion itſelf contemptible, when we aſcribe to its operations all the emotions of our hearts, which are not unfrequently inordinate and impure enough. This miſtaken notion has already given riſe to many abuſes among chriſtians. They that ſuffer themſelves to be blinded by it, generally hold their perceptions, their undertakings and their actions, to be much greater and more important than in fact they are; and it is by no means uncommon for ſuch people to attribute to themſelves a ſort of infallibility; at leaſt they cannot eaſily endure contradiction. They imagine it impoſſible for them to miſtake when they follow their inward impulſes; and the ſingle aſſertion, it is ſo with me, ſtands them inſtead of all reaſon for their opinions.

In the ſecond place, we ſhould carefully diſtinguiſh the influence which our natural temperament and our outward circumſtances, have upon our exerciſes of devotion and our moral conduct, from the efficacies of religion and the ſpirit of God, and not take them for ſpiritual experiences of a peculiar order. You know, my friends, that our ſoul is moſt intimately connected with our body; and that no remarkable alteration can happen to the one without occaſioning

occaſioning a correſpondent alteration in the other. When every part of our body is in health, when the mixture and motion of its juices go properly on, when we feel neither pain nor infirmity, our mind is alert in all its functions; it can operate free and unmoleſted, and it coſts us no trouble to think juſtly, methodically, perſpicuouſly. Reaſon then prevails over all the inferior powers of our ſoul, and we contemplate the truth in an unclouded light, but not with violent paſſion. On the other hand, if diſorderly or extraordinary alterations ariſe in our body: our uſual train of thinking is preſently altered and our mind no longer acts ſo regularly as it was wont to do. For inſtance, if our ſenſes are touched by agreeable objects; if we happen to be in a pleaſant country, where nature appears in all her magnificence, and every living creature is elate with joy; if our heart be affected by the ſweet melody of harmonious ſounds: our juices take a quicker motion; we are tranſported with joy, our thoughts flow on in a more rapid ſucceſſion, with increaſing vivacity and vigour; and if we then reflect on the ſublime doctrines of religion, the pleaſure we feel in them muſt of neceſſity be uncommonly great, it muſt often be truly extatic. On the other hand, if our body be attacked by any diſorder; if the juices become thick, and the blood creep heavily and ſluggiſhly along in the veins; if the nerves become relaxed and feeble: the operations of the mind will correſpond with theſe contingences. We ſhall find

it wearisome to think with order and continuity; our thoughts will tardily and abruptly succeed each other; they will always have a sort of obscurity about them, and we shall vainly endeavour to form conceptions so clear and lively as at other times. The most important, the sublimest truths, will then make little impression on us. We shall hear or read the most elegant sentiments and descriptions, with the utmost coldness and indifference. We shall hold mirth in abhorrence, and resign ourselves to sullenness and melancholy. The same almost may be advanced of the outward situation and conjunctures in which we may happen to be. When we lead an unsollicitous, a convenient and tranquil life; when we can enjoy the delights of friendship, and the agreeable conversation of well-cultivated minds: our thoughts will certainly flow more freely, our feelings will be more alert, and we shall consider and practise religion with greater vivacity and ardour, than when we are oppressed by cares for food and raiment; when we are in low and adverse circumstances, when one misfortune assails us after another; or when we are obliged chiefly to frequent the melancholy and dejected. So great is the influence which our state of body and our outward condition have on the agency and operations of our mind. May we not be mistaken then in representing these alterations, which so naturally arise and are so easily explained, as supernatural dispensations, as extraordinary occurrences? May we not deceive

ourselves

ourſelves when we eſteem any livelier ſentiment, any more joyous emotion, as immediate conſolations from on high, as celeſtial raptures? May we not vex and torment ourſelves in vain, when we conſider the inſenſibility and liſtleſſneſs which originate in the diſorder of the body as a dereliction of God, or as a token of his wrath and diſpleaſure?

Neither are we thirdly to reckon a particular degree of vivacity of ſentiment as an eſſential ingredient in ſpiritual experiences. This is a baneful prejudice of many chriſtians, to whom however we cannot deny a ſincere affection for goodneſs. They inſiſt too much on ſenſible and violent emotions, and think their private acts of devotion are not of the genuine ſort without them. Their ſorrow for ſin muſt be accompanied by ſcalding tears; their joy in God and his ſalvation muſt be extatic; their aſpirations after eternal felicity muſt be rapturous, before they can be ſatisfied with their temper of mind. A rational abhorrence of all iniquity, an actual abſtinence from it, a voluntary and deliberate purpoſe uniformly to perſevere in the ſervice of God and virtue, a calm reliance on the perfections and wiſe providence of the Almighty, a ſtedfaſt expectation of the future glory, is not enough for them. Their blood muſt have at leaſt as much ſhare in their devotion as their rational underſtanding, and perhaps a greater, for rendering them ſatisfied with it. How much uſeleſs pains do ſuch perſons often take for exciting theſe ſenſual and vehement emotions! How

uneaſy, how agitated, how diſtreſſed, are they when they cannot raiſe them to ſuch a height as they wiſh, and which they often regard as indiſpenſably neceſſary! Such a chriſtian, for inſtance, with more ſincerity than judgment, betakes himſelf to prayer in his retirement; he humbles himſelf before God on account of his manifold ſins; he confeſſes the guilt and infamy of his conduct; he abhors his failings and tranſgreſſions; he calls on the Lord for pity and pardon. Sin is above all things hateful to him; he wiſhes for nothing ſo much as to be delivered and purified from it; he forms the moſt ſerious reſolutions never more to obey his irregular luſts, but to live a godly life; he reſolves with all his heart to walk willingly and faithfully in all the commandments of God. In this manner he has a rational and juſt experience of the efficacy which the doctrines of religion poſſeſs of bringing their confeſſors to contrition, and of arming them againſt wickedneſs; and he may ſafely reſt in this, and ſet about executing his pious reſolutions with alacrity. But he is too much accuſtomed to ſenſual ideas and feelings to be ſatisfied with it. During his prayer he has felt no vehement agitation on account of his ſins; he has had no apprehenſion of the horrors of hell; his tears would not flow ſo copiouſly as he could have wiſhed; the aſſurance of his pardon was not quite ſo ſenſible and did not move him ſo forcibly, as in other conjunctures and at other times. All this appears to him ſuſpicious; he complains of

his hard and inſenſible heart; he bewails his emptineſs of grace; he reprobates the imperfection of his devotion; he conceives that the Almighty has turned away his face from him, and that he is utterly forſaken of heaven. Theſe thoughts plunge him into the deepeſt diſtreſs, and render the good effects wrought in him by religion, at leaſt for a length of time, intirely fruitleſs. Tormenting anxieties and troubles take poſſeſſion of his ſoul; and nothing will reſtore him to tranquillity and peace till he be able to call forth thoſe tears, and excite thoſe ſenſible emotions, thoſe violent agitations, which he has hitherto endeavoured in vain to produce. It is only then, according to his idea, that he experiences the bitterneſs of ſin; feels that he is at peace with heaven and taſtes the comforts of pardon; it is with him as if he heard the Almighty ſay to him, "Thy ſins are forgiven thee." — But, how liable to error is ſuch a conduct as this! Does religion then conſiſt in theſe ſenſible feelings, in a quicker or ſlower circulation of the blood and the animal ſpirits, or in clear and juſt perceptions, firm and unforced reſolutions, and ſincere endeavours to walk in general according to its precepts? Are we not to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth? Is not the chriſtian worſhip a reaſonable ſervice? Muſt we found our compoſure, our ſatisfaction, our hopes, on things that are not in our power, that depend on the fluctuating ſtate of our bodies, of our health, our outward circumſtances, and frequently even on

accidents? Are we to make the diſcharge of our duties unneceſſarily irkſome and oppreſſive, and thus even hinder our growth in goodneſs? Are we to live in a perpetual turmoil and hurry, and never to enjoy the pleaſing tranquillity which true virtue provides for her friends? No! the more rational, the more placid, the more calm our experiences of the power of religion, the leſs ſenſible and fortuitous: the better and more infallible they are.

Fourthly we ſhould neither preſcribe our perſonal experiences and feelings as a rule for others, nor make the experiences and feelings of others a law to us. The effects which the doctrines of religion produce in different perſons, are, as we have already noticed, as various as their temperaments, their ſagacity and other contingences; indeed not eſſentially, but in quality and degree. With one perſon they are more lively and ſenſible; with another more rational and intellectual. Many have received from nature a ſoft and yielding heart, and are ſenſibly affected on all occaſions; their ſenſes and their imagination are ever alert and buſy. They have an influence on all their actions. Do they contemplate their failings and iniquities? Sorrow pervades their ſoul, and guſhes forth in a torrent of tears. Do they repreſent to themſelves the grace of God, the love of the Redeemer, the felicities of heaven? They are abſorbed as it were in the moſt delightful admiration, and their joy proceeds to extacy. But, do not ſuch chriſtians deceive themſelves, who

who imagine that the degree of ſorrow, or of joy, to which they attain, is a general and eſſential characteriſtic of true chriſtianity? Are they not overhaſty in their judgment, when they reckon all for unconverted and vicious perſons, who in theſe reſpects cannot come up to them? We ſhould therefore never conclude, from what we feel and experience, that all ſincere votaries of God and Chriſt ought to feel in the ſame manner and to the ſame degree. Neither ſhould we take the experiences of others for the unqualified model of our imitation. Many a ſincere chriſtian by not attending to this rule has embarraſſed himſelf in the greateſt difficulties. He reads, or he hears, that this or the other ſaint, in his penitence, fell into an uncommon and continued ſorrow; that he felt an extraordinary remorſe, and for a long time was inconſolably afflicted, and wept day and night for his ſins — and the like. For want of knowledge he conceives this to be a neceſſary part of real repentance, and that he muſt experience the very ſame before he can properly ſay he is converted. Accordingly he torments himſelf ſo long, till he thinks he is come up to the pattern before him; let his nature and conſtitution oppoſe itſelf as ſtrongly as it may. But can ſuch forced and unnatural feelings deſerve the name of ſpiritual and godly experiences of the power of religion? Can you imagine, my friends, that theſe agitations are agreeable to the author of our nature, who requires of us a reaſonable worſhip and a voluntary

tary obedience? Certainly not. He has indeed patience with theſe infirmities; but they are contrary to his deſigns, in oppoſition to his will, and can only tend to the prejudice of him that entertains them.

Laſtly, for theſe ſpiritual experiences we ſhould never forget the enlightening of our mind and the uſe of our reaſon. This is a common failing with numbers of chriſtians. They are ſo much employed in exciting ſenſible feelings, and in obtaining what they, often falſely, term ſpiritual experience, that they give themſelves little or no concern about cultivating and progreſſively perfecting the nobler part of their being, their rational mind. They prefer the violent ebullitions of their blood to the tranquil operations of reaſon, and ſeem to be all ſenſation. Their knowledge is therefore generally very obſcure and defective; they regard the augmentation and improvement of it as merely a bye-work of little importance. Their feelings are to compenſate the miſchiefs of ignorance and error: they imagine ſentiment to be their ſafeſt guide. Nay, they even ſcorn the ſuggeſtions of reaſon, and are extremely cautious of following her precepts and her light. Such notions, my friends, directly lead to fanaticiſm, and to all the extravagances attendant on it. So ſoon as we reject the uſe of reaſon, we are perpetually in danger of being deceived and miſled by our own hearts. Experience and fancy are very nearly allied: how are we to diſcriminate them, unleſs

leſs we are aſſiſted and guided in our judgment by an enlightened and well diſciplined underſtanding? And what is all our religion and virtue, if it be not founded on knowledge and certainty? Can we be abſolved from the charge of ſuperſtition, if we act, not from reaſon and argument but merely by inſtinct? Indeed, the more perſpicuous our knowledge is, the more juſtly and reaſonably we accuſtom ourſelves to think: the more gentle and orderly will our emotions be, the more rational and conſiſtent our ſpiritual experiences. But this likewiſe brings us nearer to perfection; it gives our worſhip and our virtue a real value; it renders our conduct conſiſtent, and we thus begin to qualify ourſelves for that pure and exalted devotion in which the purer intelligences of heaven are employed.

Theſe, pious hearers, are the principal rules we ſhould obſerve, in regard to ſpiritual experiences, if we would be ſafe from the extravagances of ſuperſtition and the follies of fanaticiſm. You will much miſtake my meaning however if you draw from it this falſe concluſion; that all that is ſaid of ſpiritual experiences ariſes from fancy, and that the bare knowledge of religion is ſufficient to ſalvation. No, he cannot be a true chriſtian, who does not experience the divine efficacy of the doctrine which he confeſſes and manifeſt the fruits of it in his heart and life. Your knowledge, chriſtians, muſt be a vital principle; it muſt moderate your appetites for earthly things; it muſt purify your hearts and direct your affections to worthy objects; it muſt reform,

renew,

renew, improve, regulate you and govern your whole deportment, if you would be rendered happy by it. Try yourſelves by theſe characteriſtics, and reſt not in the outward privileges and profeſſion of the chriſtian. If you can reflect upon ſin without deteſtation and abhorrence; on virtue and piety without eſteem and affection; on the favour of God and the example of Jeſus, without admiration and gratitude; the felicities of heaven without aſpirations after them; if all theſe have but a feeble or no influence at all on your determinations and actions: you are then of the number of thoſe hypocrites who deny by their works what they confeſs in their words. Would you avoid the dreadful lot, which as ſuch you muſt expect for eternity, expand your hearts to the ſaving efficacy of the religion of Jeſus. Let the doctrines it inculcates act powerfully in you. Follow its precepts, and teſtify the integrity of your faith by an unremitted induſtry in all good works. Call upon God for his powerful aſſiſtance in theſe endeavours, and beware of grieving the ſpirit of grace by pertinacious reſiſtance. Thus will you know, as our ſaviour declares in the words of our text, that his doctrine is of God. You will experience that it has the power to render its ſincere votaries virtuous, holy, tranquil, cheerful, happy; that it will ſupport you in all temptations and comfort you in all afflictions; that it will not abandon you even in the ſhades of death; and that you will hereafter obtain the actual poſſeſſion of that vaſt felicity it aſſures us of.

SERMON XXVI.

The Value of Social and Public Worſhip.

GOD, to meditate on thee, to worſhip thee, to have communion with thee, how honourable, how bleſſed an employment! How far it exalts us above the other inhabitants of the duſt! How near it brings us to thy worſhipers in heaven, and to thee thyſelf, who art all in all both to them and to us! Yes, in meditating on thee, we meditate on all that is good, that is great, that is exalted, that is venerable and amiable! In praying to thee, we pray to the creator and ſovereign of the univerſe, the wiſe and benign ruler, the gracious father, the ſupreme friend and benefactor of us and of all mankind! In having communion with thee, we have communion with the eternal, inexhauſtible fountain of light, of life, of happineſs! In employing ourſelves in thy ſervice, we feel the whole dignity of the man and of the chriſtian; feel that we are thy offſpring, thy children, that we are capable of high employments, and are ordained

dained by thee for ſuch ! Oh might then the apprehenſion of thee and of communion with thee ever be and procure to us what it may and ſhould be and procure to mankind and to chriſtians ! Oh might we never enter the place which is conſecrated to this divine employment without reverence, and never leave it without a bleſſing ! Let us then, omniſcient Maſter, omnipreſent King, let us here always intimately feel thy preſence, and always powerfully experience the ſaving influences of thy holy ſpirit ! Let light and life, and energy and comfort flow down upon us from thy throne, when in the ſentiment of our manifold and urgent neceſſities, we here invoke thee for ſupplies of thy bounty. Be it our conſtant aim in aſſembling here in thy preſence, ever more plainly and convincingly to diſcern the truth, to confirm ourſelves in the belief in thee and in thy ſon Jeſus, ever to advance in piety and goodneſs, in content and ſatisfaction, to conſolidate our hopes, to perſevere in the onward courſe of our vocation, and to become conſtantly more qualified for the ſuperior life; be this the fruit we ſhall reap from our attendance in this place! Teach us, to that end, always to be gaining juſter conceptions of the value of ſocial and public worſhip, always more highly to prize it; and always to be making a more faithful application of it. Bleſs even now our reflections on theſe important objects, and from the place in which angels worſhip, oh deign to bend thine ear to our

prayers,

prayers, and ſmile in mercy on thoſe who ſeek thee where thou haſt promiſed to be found, through Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe name we further addreſs thee, ſaying, Our father, &c.

PSALM XXVII. 4.

One thing have I deſired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to viſit his temple.

SOCIAL and public worſhip, as employing both the mind and the heart of man, and that with the important doctrines of religion, is entirely peculiar to chriſtianity. Every religion had its rites, its ſolemnities, its feſtivals; all of them convoked their profeſſors at ſtated times and on particular occaſions, in the temples and at the altars of their gods; all of them ſpread fear and terror more or leſs around them; all of them employed and dazzled the ſenſes of their worſhipers with more or leſs pomp and magnificence. But in none of them was found and wholeſome nouriſhment adminiſtered to the mind and heart of reflecting ſenſible men; none provided for his illumination and inſtruction, for his moral improvement, for his ſerenity and his comfort. No where was man made acquainted with the great ends of life, his duties; no where taught the relations in which he ſtands

to

to the deity, the rational worſhip and adoration of him; no where incited to virtue and directed to happineſs. All this, my dear friends, is the peculiar boaſt of chriſtianity. And how great are theſe advantages! Who can calculate all the good that has accrued from them, and ſtill accrues? — I am ſenſible that public and congregational worſhip, even where it is the leaſt perverted from its proper object, is not always productive of what it might and ſhould effect. It is adminiſtered by men; and who knows not how frequently the beſt and moſt excellent inſtitutions of creatures ſo liable to errors and failings, may be miſapplied? And as it is diſpenſed by men, ſo is it likewiſe attended and uſed by men; and how apt are mankind to loſe ſight of the true deſign of things, and to make them ſubſervient to their indolence or their paſſions! But is it reaſonable to deny anything its value, becauſe of adventitious abuſe? No, my dear friends, public and ſocial worſhip is undoubtedly of very great value, be it as frequently and as ſhamefully abuſed as it may. It is and will ever remain an excellent means of inſtruction, of improvement, of comfort, of awakening and exerciſing devotion and piety, of ſerving the cauſe of humanity and of promoting univerſal and brotherly love. And if the pſalmiſt in our text could juſtly ſay: "One thing have I deſired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold

hold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to viſit his temple," we, chriſtians, have greater, far greater reaſon to prize our national, eſtabliſhed, ſocial worſhip, and to frequent it with inward ſatisfaction and delight! Of this, my pious hearers, I would fain convince you by my preſent diſcourſe. To this end let me examine with you the value of ſocial and public worſhip. But let us, in the reſearch proceed with the greater caution and impartiality, as we are very liable to be miſled in it by ſuperſtition and prejudice. Let us therefore at the ſame time ſee, as well wherein the value of worſhip cannot conſiſt, as likewiſe wherein it actually does conſiſt; or, both what it cannot be and cannot perform, and what it really is and does afford.

Social and public worſhip, as well as all worſhip in general, has no value whatever as an ultimate end, but only as conducive to ſome higher purpoſe. As eating and drinking, bodily motion and exerciſe, are not ends, but means of preſerving our terreſtrial life, of eſtabliſhing our health, and of improving our faculties; ſo likewiſe inſtruction and reflection, all worſhip and exerciſes of piety, are no more than means of nouriſhing our ſpirit, of inſpiring us with deſire and ability to goodneſs, and thereby of promoting our perfection and happineſs. The ſame holds good of private worſhip, and of all that we obſerve and practiſe in divine ſervice. We there worſhip God, not for the ſake

of worſhiping him; for he wants not our homage and our ſervice: but we worſhip him, from the deep and lively ſenſe we have of his greatneſs and perfection, and our dependence upon him, to invigorate every pious ſentiment, to vanquiſh every turbulent paſſion, to diſmiſs every corroding care, and to increaſe our readineſs and aptitude to all that is juſt and right, that is generous and great. We there pray, not for the ſake of praying; for God knows what we want, and does continually what is beſt: but we pray, for the ſake of elevating our mind, of purifying and compoſing our heart, and of rendering ourſelves fitter for the mercy of God, and more ſuſceptible of the influence of his ſpirit. We there allow ourſelves to be inſtructed in our duties, in the true end of our creation, and in the will of the Higheſt, not for the ſake of being inſtructed in theſe matters: but that we may the better fulfil our obligations, more certainly anſwer the purpoſe for which we are placed on the earth, and more faithfully comply with the will of our maker. We there reflect upon the doctrines of religion and chriſtianity, not for the ſake of reflecting on them, but to experience by theſe reflections their efficacy to our amendment and pacification. We there renew our moſt ſacred reſolves, our moſt ſolemn vows, not ſo much for the ſake of renewing them, as to imprint them the deeper in our hearts, and to reduce them to practice with more alacrity and zeal. We there make a public profeſſion

profeſſion of our belief and our hope, not for the ſake of making that profeſſion, but thereby to confirm ourſelves in that faith, to ſtrengthen our confidence in thoſe promiſes, and to live more conſiſtently with both. And thus are the ſeveral acts of worſhip not ends but means. We uſe them, not on their own account, but for the good effects and conſequences they may and are fitted to produce. In theſe, and not in thoſe, conſiſts all the value of worſhip.

It poſſeſſes this value ſecondly, only in ſo far as it is rational, ſo far as it is founded on truth, on juſt conceptions of God and his will and our relations to him, and on ſuch diſpoſitions as are conſonant to theſe conceptions; only in ſo far as it employs the underſtanding and the heart of the worſhiper in a manner worthy of his nature and the ends of his creation. The worſhip of the chriſtian ſhould be rational, his adoration of the deity ſhould be in ſpirit and in truth. A worſhip which only occupies and amuſes the ſenſes, which dazzles or captivates by art and ornament, by pomp and ſound, which conſiſts in empty ceremonies and rites, affords nothing for the mind to expatiate upon, and communicates nothing ſubſtantial, nothing generous, nothing noble and grand to the heart; ſuch a worſhip can poſſeſs no higher value than other theatrical exhibitions, which attract the eyes of the multitude and furniſh them with entertainment or diſtraction. Still leſs real

value does a ſuperſtitious worſhip poſſeſs, which gives us mean and falſe conceptions of the deity; which ſpreads ſlaviſh conſternation and terror among its followers; conceals the Father of mankind from their ſight, and ſubſtitutes in his place an auſtere and implacable deſpot, an inexorable judge; at the ſame time flattering their paſſions, diſcharging them from indiſpenſable obligations, preſenting them with the palliatives of falſe repoſe, and attributing a force and efficacy to mere outward actions and bodily exerciſes, which they have not and cannot have. It is written, "In vain do they worſhip me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

As little advantage thirdly can we derive from our worſhip, if we have not regard to the temper of mind in which we frequent it, the views we have in it, and the uſe to which we apply it. It is not our attendance on its offices, but the ſolid purport of this attendance, that renders it agreeable to God and a ſpring of bleſſings to ourſelves. Acts of devotion do not operate upon us like a magical charm, without our participation or concurrence; they improve us neither againſt our will nor without our co-operation; they are performed in the preſence of God, the ſearcher of hearts; and he is not to be impoſed on by outward appearance, like men. No, only the conſciouſneſs and the conſideration, the earneſtneſs and the reflection, with which we perform our devotions; only reve-

rence

rence fo God, love to him, delight and confidence in him; the deſire to pleaſe and to reſemble him; only poſitive purpoſes of becoming wiſer and better: only theſe can confer any real value on our acts of devotion.

Hence therefore it follows, that our worſhip can neither repair our former tranſgreſſions, nor ſupply the place of a virtuous and pious life, nor procure us particular bleſſings and teſtimonies of favour from God, without regard to its conſequences and effects. He that expects this from divine worſhip, aſcribes to it efficacies which it does not poſſeſs; he therefore forms ſuperſtitious notions both of its deſign and its value. To ſuch an one is applicable the expoſtulation of God by the prophet: "To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me?" To what purpoſe is the hypocritical reverence you ſhew me? Your worſhip is offenſive to me, I am weary to bear it. "And when ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood;" your hearts and your lives are contaminated with vice. No, neither praying, nor ſinging, nor communicating, nor keeping feſtivals; only actual amendment, only reſtitution of property unjuſtly obtained, only earneſt endeavours to counteract every ſpecies of moral turpitude, and to correct it as much as poſſible, only this can efface our ſins, and remove their pernicious effects from ourſelves

and from others. Only redoubled induſtry in virtue and piety can in any degree compenſate the negligence we have hitherto ſhewn. Only innocency of heart and probity of life, only uprightneſs and ſincerity, can render us capable of the favour of God and partakers of his diſtinguiſhed bleſſings.

Take heed then, my pious hearers, of expecting from worſhip in general, and from public and ſocial worſhip in particular, more than it is able to perform, and of thus aſcribing to it a value which it does not poſſeſs. Learn rather its true, its peculiar worth, and ſtrive more and more completely to enjoy the benefits it is able effectually to procure you. Wherein then conſiſts this worth? What are theſe benefits? Inſtruction, amendment, ſerenity and comfort, excitation and exerciſe of devotion, the promotion of humanity, and univerſal brotherly love: this is what we may reaſonably expect from public and ſocial worſhip. And what a great, an ineſtimable value muſt not this confer upon it!

Firſt then inſtruction, and that on the moſt important matters, matters of the higheſt concern to all mankind; inſtruction concerning God, his will, our own deſtination, our duties and the way to happineſs; inſtruction on what God is in regard to us, and what we are in reſpect to him, on what we at preſent are, and what we ſhall hereafter be; inſtruction in all that can captivate the curioſity of man

man and moſt agreeably employ both his underſtanding and his heart. Let theſe inſtructions be as defective as they may; let them be never ſo much mingled with error: yet how greatly is the knowledge of truth and the conviction of truth, conſidered at large, promoted thereby! How much light is thus diffuſed amongſt all claſſes and conditions of men! What incitement to reflection, what diverſified exerciſe does it not occaſion to the mental powers! One perſon is reminded of what he already knew and believed, and will thus be confirmed in his knowledge and faith; another will clearly perceive what was totally concealed from him before, or only floated about in the obſcurer receſſes of his mind; a third will be rendered attentive to ſome doctrine of importance, feel the full weight of its truth, and be led to think it over again; a fourth contemplates ſome truth he had already diſcovered in a clearer point of view, on a different ſide, in other and more various combinations, and thus acquires a knowledge of it more perſpicuous and complete; another combines it with his habitual way of thinking, learns to apply it more pointedly to himſelf, and thus to turn it to the beſt account. One is freed from a doubt, and another from an error. A careleſs and inattentive perſon is brought to reflect, and indifference is quickened into concern. At leaſt ſome ſort of impreſſion muſt be made of deity, of religion, of duty and virtue, of our future expectations and the ultimate end of man. And how

is it poſſible for impreſſions ſo frequently retouched and repaired to be totally obliterated and effaced, or to remain without effect? Certainly no truth, no ſound and wholeſome doctrine delivered with energy can be delivered abſolutely in vain. They are grains of wheat ſtrewn by the ſervants of the lord of the church under his own inſpection, which will ſpring up, ſome ſooner and others later, and produce fruit more or leſs according to the richneſs of the ſoil into which they are caſt; and at the day of the harveſt it will be ſeen how well-founded were the hopes of the ſower, and how prolific the grain he ſowed.

Encouragement and impulſe to duty and virtue is another advantage we may expect from our attendance on divine worſhip, and which undoubtedly gives it a great value. And in how many various ways are we there ſtimulated and encouraged to duty and to virtue! The commands, the promiſes, the denunciations of God; the benefits and example of Jeſus; the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of duty; the beauty, the amiableneſs, the utility of virtue; the infamy and pernicious effects of vice; the dignity of man and the dignity of the chriſtian; joyful and terrifying views of the preſent and the future life: the inward ſentiment of what is juſt and expedient; our own experiences and thoſe of others; ſelf-love; deſire of applauſe; philanthropy; hope and fear; life and death; miſery and happineſs; what motives to duty and virtue are not here diſ-

played

played and enforced! What motives of the human mind not ſet in motion! What emotions of the human heart not excited! What paſſions not harmoniſed with truth and virtue! And what prejudices againſt practical chriſtianity are here left unconquered, what pretences of ſloth not refuted, what cavils and evaſions unanſwered? And if in addition to this the poſſibility and facility of the matter is ſhewn, the method in which it is to be performed pointed out, and the beſt means provided to that end: muſt not all this be productive of good, of much good; muſt it not be extremely advantageous to the performance of duty and to the practice of virtue? muſt it not occaſion thouſands and thouſands of good ſentiments and actions amongſt mankind?

Indeed experience allows us as little to doubt of it as the nature of the caſe itſelf. No, all do not depart unimproved from theſe ſchools of chriſtian wiſdom and virtue. Many are beholden to them for inducement and ſtimulation to amendment, many for their return to the line of duty and rectitude, many for preſervation from ſin, for motive and inclination to goodneſs. How often does ſome truth, important to the religion or the morals of a man, dart like a pure ray of light into his benighted ſoul, touch him to the quick, thoroughly affect him with hope or fear, with trouble or with joy; diſcover to him the true ſtate of his heart, the real frame of his life; beget in him the nobleſt wiſhes, the beſt reſolutions;

lutions; accompany him home, attend him in all his affairs, purſue him in all the companies he frequents, and leave him no reſt till he ſurrender himſelf to its influence, and fully experience its improving and bleſſing energy! — How many a wicked purpoſe is rendered abortive, becauſe he who conceived and harboured it in his breaſt, led by the mercy of providence exactly to hear ſome doctrine or precept of religion, particularly ſuited to him, delivered with ſentiment and force, ſtruck and alarmed by it, has been brought to reflection, and induced to reform his mind and manners! How many a good and chriſtian deed, how many a reconciliation with adverſaries and foes, how many a reſolution to lead a new life, how many a ſtep towards virtue, how many acts of liberality have been occaſioned by ſuch diſcourſes and exerciſes of worſhip! How many ſallies of violent, brutal paſſions have been thus prevented! — — And even if theſe effects fall out but rarely, if it be only now and then that a wicked perſon is thus induced to forſake the error of his ways; yet who can deny that the good man is ſtrengthened and confirmed by theſe means in his good diſpoſitions, that he is ſtimulated to zeal and perſeverance in good, that he is rendered happy in the lively ſentiment of his truly chriſtian diſpoſitions, the comfort of an approving conſcience, the aſſurance of divine approbation and favour, has a foretaſte of the bleſſed reward of his fidelity, and thence feels the acquiſition of freſh courage and reſolution

ſolution to complete the work he has begun, to purſue his courſe with confidence, and to allow nothing to deprive him of the victor's crown? Yes, my dear friends, it is indiſputable, that public and ſocial worſhip, by throwing the moſt ſalutary impediments in the way of wickedneſs and vice, prevents numberleſs diſorders and crimes in human ſociety; it is not to be denied, that it animates t e true chriſtian to more ſtrenuous efforts in goodneſs and virtue, and keeps him from becoming weary and diſheartened in probity and beneficence. And how great theſe advantages!

How much conſolation and ſerenity does thirdly this worſhip ſhed into the hearts of men! How many anxious cares, how many corroding troubles, does it not moderate or remove! How differently do they there often learn to judge of the world and their own condition! How differently to think of what are uſually termed proſperity and adverſity! How much more calmly and reſignedly to bear their troubles, how much more confidently and cheerfully to hope in God while encompaſſed by poverty and woe, how much more undauntedly to encounter every danger and even death itſelf, when all theſe things appear to them in the light of religion and chriſtianity, when they have learnt to conſider them in their dependency on the will of the all-wiſe and all-gracious ruler of the world, and in their combination with human perfection and happineſs! And when forgiveneſs of ſins is there announced to

the contrite and returning ſinner, the promiſes of aſſiſtance and ſupport held out to the feeble, a better, an eternal life diſplayed before the wretched, indemnity and retribution beyond the grave aſſured to the oppreſſed and innocent ſufferer, what a healing balm, what refreſhment and reſtoration, muſt this ſhed into the ſoul that is thirſting and panting after comfort!

I here addreſs myſelf to your own experience, ye who in ſincerity of heart and deſign frequent the public worſhip. Say, my chriſtian brothers and ſiſters, have ye not often come into the aſſembly of the worſhipers of God, with heavy hearts and troubled minds? Has not often a ſecret pain, a ſorrow of ſoul, attended you thither? Were ye not often languiſhing in ſearch of conſolation and peace? and have ye not there often found that conſolation, that peace? Has not the burden that oppreſſed you, there fallen off from your heart? Has not a cheering beam proceeded thence, that has enlightened your gloomy path, and ſhewn you an iſſue from the labyrinth in which you were involved? Have ye not often returned home, comforted, ſtrengthened, revived? — And what ſincere chriſtian has not there rejoiced in the paternal love of God, in the fraternal affection of Jeſus, in his relation to God and Jeſus, in his deſtination to a bleſſed immortality, in his approximation to the mark of his high calling; and in the enjoyment of theſe delights has he not there learnt to endure, to deſpiſe, to forget all the troubles,

troubles, all the ſufferings, all the evils of the preſent life? Oh who can calculate all the comfort and ſerenity of ſoul that mankind have derived from chriſtian worſhip, all the tears of ſorrow and pain which there have ceaſed to flow, all the cheerful and bleſſed emotions which have there been taught to riſe: what a diminution of human miſery, what an augmentation of human happineſs would be the reſult on all hands, in cottages and in palaces, among all claſſes and conditions of men; and what an ineſtimable value muſt this confer on public worſhip in our ſight!

Public and ſocial worſhip acquires fourthly a new value, as it kindles and enflames our devotion, and gives more life and dignity to our peculiar worſhip. Theſe ſolemn inſtitutions of religion have a native tendency to cheriſh and diffuſe the ſentiment of piety! How often does public worſhip inſpire even the thoughtleſs and vain with ſerioufneſs, the ſcoffer with reverence, and the inſenſible and careleſs with ſentiment and reflection! How readily are ſentiments communicated; how principally the ſentiments of piety and devotion! Like an electrical fire they frequently ſeize on men of the moſt different minds and manners, infuſing into their hearts a ſpiritual life. And if, my dear friends, I attend a worſhip where prayer, pſalmody, the diſcourſe of the miniſter, where all conſpire to impreſs me with godly ſentiments and reflections; where a profound ſilence, a general and continued attention prevails around

around me, drawing off my mind by degrees from all outward things, and fixing it entirely on itſelf and on God; when I there perceive my friends and acquaintance, or even ſtrangers, of every age, either ſex, every rank and condition, immerſed in ſerious meditation, and pervaded with holy affections; when I unite with a great aſſembly, a whole congregation, humbly proſtrate before him who dwells in heaven and with his majeſty fills both heaven and earth, pouring out their ſouls before him who made them, imploring grace and mercy and help of him from one mouth; when I ſee them, under a lively ſenſe of their weakneſs and their manifold ſpiritual wants, open the avenues of their hearts and minds to the influence of religion and chriſtianity, and with eagerneſs of ſoul imbibe light and conſolation and acquieſcence and ability to good; when I hear them celebrate the praiſes of the Allbountiful and Allwiſe for their exiſtence and his bounties, rejoice in their connection with him, and renew their vows of fidelity and obedience: what an impreſſion muſt it make on me! When we there contemplate him as the former of unnumbered worlds, and the ſource whence all exiſtence is derived, admiration and reverence fill our breaſts. When we conſider him as the ſupreme diſpoſer of events, who wields the ſceptre of the univerſe, and does all things according to his pleaſure in heaven and on earth, the ſenſe of our conſtant dependence on his providence leads us to caſt our cares upon him.

him. When we regard him as the moral ruler of the world, who has eſtabliſhed his law in the heart of man, who has enforced it by ſanctions of the moſt awful nature, and will not ſuffer the guilty to eſcape unpuniſhed, the recollection of our treſpaſſes begets in us the ſincereſt compunction and regret; and this compunction is greatly increaſed by contemplating him as the author of all our bliſs, as the fountain from which our exiſtence, our comforts, our hopes are derived. Gratitude mingles with every other affection, and the love of ſo kind and gracious a being, purifies our truſt, our admiration and our fear. Theſe affections are the foundation of religious worſhip; and when they glow in the breaſt with their native ardour, they delight to expreſs themſelves in the language of devotion. They lead us irreſiſtibly to the throne of God, to pour out, in the preſence of him who made us, the emotions which infinite perfection inſpires. How forcibly muſt I then feel my own imbecility, my entire dependance on that ſovereign ſpirit, how intimately feel his preſence! How ſtrongly muſt I feel myſelf penetrated with reverence, with love to him, with ſubmiſſion to his will, with confidence in him, with joy in all the inſtances of his benignity! How important muſt religion then appear to me! How eaſy, how agreeable muſt it there be to me, to humble myſelf in the duſt, with all my brethren and ſiſters, high and low, rich and poor, in the preſence of our common creator and father, adoring his infinite

finite majeſty, and drawing life and happineſs from his ſufficiency! And muſt not this incitement, this fervour of devotion, though it ſhould not always have place in an equal, and ſtill leſs always in a ſuperior degree, muſt it not confer a great value upon public and ſocial worſhip?

What a value in ſhort muſt it receive, my pious hearers, from the idea, that by it the ſentiment of the natural equality of mankind and their mutual affinity, is maintained and invigorated, and that they are brought into ſo cloſe a connection and ſo intimate a union together by its means! Everything that is here tranſacted and taught reminds us of our common origin, of our common wants and infirmities, of our common deſtination. Everything that paſſes here muſt humble the pride of the great, and inſpire courage and confidence into them of low degree; everything muſt promote the intereſts of humanity and the kind affections. And what binds men more together than the community of faith, of hope, of religious worſhip? Here we all preſent ourſelves as feeble, dependent creatures, as creatures that are in want of inſtruction, of ability, of ſupport and aſſiſtance, who cannot ſubſiſt of themſelves; all as frail, ſinful beings, aſking for grace and pity. Here we all humble ourſelves before him who only is wiſe, only mighty, only great, and to whom all men, all nations, all worlds are as nothing. Here we all eat of the ſame bread, drink of the ſame cup, and as the children of one father

all

all enjoy at one table the repaſt of chriſtian love. Here the diſtinction of rank and dignity falls totally away, or meets with no peculiar regard. We are here, and feel ourſelves, not as powerful or weak, not as ſuperior or inferior, but as men, as chriſtians; are all ſubjects, all children of God, all the redeemed of Jeſus, the prince as the vaſſal, the rich as the poor, the learned as the ignorant. The prince now hears himſelf thus addreſſed: Thou art a god upon the earth, but thou wilt die like any child of man. Abuſe not thy power, for thou haſt a maſter, a judge in heaven, with whom there is no reſpect of perſons. And the pooreſt, the loweſt of the people, is thus at the ſame time admoniſhed: Thou too art formed after the image of thy God, thee too hath Jeſus redeemed, thou alſo art immortal; thee likewiſe an eternal life awaits; forget not thy dignity, and by a generous and independent conduct ſhew thyſelf worthy of thy origin and thy appointment. — And muſt not a divine ſervice, which may contribute, and actually does contribute ſo much to our inſtruction, to our improvement, to our repoſe, to kindle and to inflame our devotion, to the advancement of humanity and brotherly love, poſſeſs a great, an ineſtimable value?

Yes, ever ſhall ye be hailed, ever bleſſed ſhall ye be of me, ye places conſecrated to the adoration of God, ye ſolemn aſſemblies of his worſhipers on earth! With the profoundeſt reverence, with a thankful and cheerful heart will I enter your gates,

and celebrate with my brethren the worthieſt, the nobleſt ſolemnities that mankind can perform on earth. Here will I wholly ſurrender myſelf to the ſentiment of what God is and of what he is to me; and while I fulfil the duties of a worſhiper and a child of God, will at the ſame time enjoy the bleſſedneſs of being ſo. Here will I enter into the cloſeſt bands of affection with all who know and love God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he has ſent, and enjoy my own felicity and theirs. Here will I ſeek nouriſhment for my mind and my heart, eagerly imbibe every leſſon of truth, every word of exhortation, of comfort and peace, that ſhall be delivered to me, and thence return to my buſineſs in the world with invigorated powers, more joyfully diſcharge the ſeveral duties of life, and bear every burden of it with more ſubmiſſive reſignation. Here will I take on my pilgrimage the comforts that refreſh and reſtore my ſoul: I will conſider my way, repreſent to myſelf the prize for which I am ſtriving, and then with new courage purſue my courſe. Here will I enjoy in foretaſte the bleſſedneſs of that better world, where I ſhall be ſurrounded by a purer emanation of day, where my faith ſhall be changed into ſight, where, with the juſt made perfect, with ſpirits of a ſuperior order, I ſhall adore him and celebrate his praiſes who lives for ever and ever!

Such, my dear friends, may ſuch be the ſentiments with which you are impreſſed by the conſideration of the great importance of ſocial and public

worſhip; theſe the diſpoſitions and views in which you frequent it; this the generous fruit you will gather from it. So will it conſtantly become more eſtimable, more venerable, more delightful to you, never be irkſome or unpleaſant, and will procure you never-ending felicity and bliſs.

SERMON XXVII.

The Value of Solitude.

GOD, thou haſt elevated us to the rank of intelligent beings, made us creatures who have a clear inward conſciouſneſs of themſelves and their condition, who can act with conſideration and from perſpicuouſly known principles, who can make progreſſive advances in wiſdom and virtue, who can apprehend thy being and thy preſence, and have communion with thee, the father of ſpirits. Oh that we might never fail of perceiving theſe our privileges, never leave them unemployed, and conſtantly make the beſt uſe of them! Ah ſtill oppreſſed by the yoke of ſenſuality, ſtill too often and too eaſily induced to withdraw from ourſelves and from thee, our creator and father, we ramble abroad, unconſcious of ourſelves, beguiled by ſenſual luſts, among things that have more ſemblance than reality! Ah too ſeldom is it ſo bright in our mind, ſo ſilent in our heart, ſo quiet around us, that we can thoroughly rejoice in thy exiſtence and our own,

thoroughly

thoroughly apprehend our ſuperior deſtination, and think and act in complete conſiſtence with it! O God, father of our ſpirits, do thou enable us more ſenſibly to apprehend, more highly to prize our connection with thee, and render us more ſuſceptible of thy influence upon us; enable us more frequently to collect our ſcattered thoughts, to ſeek retirement, to exerciſe ourſelves more in reflection, and thus to make nearer approaches to thee and to the ſuperior life. Teach us to be jealous of the prerogative we poſſeſs as intelligent creatures, and let us find ſo much pleaſure and happineſs in the proper application of it, that we may never be wanting in appetite and incentive to it. Strengthen even now our mind, that it may perceive the truth intended to inform and to improve it, in a perſpicuous light; let it diſpel our prejudices and errors, and enable us by its luſtre, more ſecurely and happily to continue and to complete our journey of life. Hearer of prayer, we aſk it of thee in the name of Jeſus, ſaying: Our father, &c.

MARK i. 12.

And immediately the ſpirit driveth him into the wilderneſs.

CONVERSE with mankind and converſe with oneſelf; the gaieties of ſocial and the ſerioufneſs of ſolitary life; diffuſive, beneficial activity among many, and the application of the entire attention on oneſelf; vivacity in buſineſs and vivacity in reflection; noiſe and ſilence; diſſipation and recollection; are always, my pious hearers, to be interchangeably followed, if we would attain the true end of our being, anſwer our ſeveral obligations, and arrive to a certain degree of wiſdom and virtue. If we confine our exiſtence to either ſort excluſively of the other, we ſhall neglect either our own moſt important concerns, or the concerns of our brethren. In the uninterrupted buſtle of buſineſs and diſſipation, we may eaſily forget ourſelves; and by too ſevere a purſuit of retirement, we may as eaſily become indifferent and inſenſible to others. But, if we combine them both together, we ſhall live as much for others as for ourſelves, promote as far as we are able our own happineſs no leſs than that of other men, and ſhall neither be miſled into folly by the thoughtleſſneſs of the diſſipated, nor to ſullenneſs and miſanthropy by the auſterity of the recluſe. Two indirect by-roads, my pious hearers, by which numbers have in all

ages

ages ſtrayed out of their deſtined courſe, and ſtill continue to do ſo, with only this difference, that now the one and then the other is more thronged and frequented. An opinion once prevailed in the world, and in ſome parts of it ſtill prevails, that all virtue conſiſted in total ſeclusion; that the perfection of the chriſtian life conſiſted in retiring from the world altogether, in withdrawing from human converſe, in ſhutting ourſelves up in the ſolitude of a cell, and paſſing our days in barren and unprofitable ſpeculation. Such notions of a holy life have no foundation in the word of God. Moſes and the prophets, Jeſus and the apoſtles themſelves, acted a part in public life, and enjoin their diſciples not to withdraw from the world, but to go about doing good; not to wrap up their talent in a napkin, but to improve it by their induſtry; not to put their light under a buſhel, but to let it ſhine before men. The retreat therefore which ſcripture recommends, is temporary and not total; is not the retreat of a monk to his cell, or a hermit to his cave; but of men living in the world, going out of it for a time, to return with greater improvement. At preſent, at leaſt in our part of our world, thoſe times are paſt, when the ſolitary and contemplative life was in ſuch high reputation, and a total retreat from the world was thought the ſole means of approaching towards heaven. Now the oppoſite path is more univerſally trodden: company is everything; and ſilence and retirement are fallen with the majority into evil

report. But whether they merit this report? Whether under proper limitations they ſtill are not worthy of the uſe and eſteem of the moraliſt and the chriſtian? Whether we have not cauſe, in this particular likewiſe, to imitate our ſaviour Jeſus, and like him to be led of the ſpirit, to be led by the ſenſe of our ſpiritual wants, into the wilderneſs or into retirement? This, my pious hearers, is what I intend now to enter with you into the examination of. I mean to diſcourſe to you on the value and the diſcreet uſe of ſolitude; firſt ſtating the ſubject, then ſhewing its utility, and laſtly adding a few rules for the prudent employment of it.

By the ſolitude which I recommend, I mean not, as you already perceive from what I mentioned juſt now, a life paſſed in abſolute ſeclufion from all commerce with the world and all intercourſe with mankind, not the life of the monk or the hermit. Such a life is plainly in oppoſition to the appointment and happineſs of man, and at moſt is adapted only to the feeble, whom the weight of misfortunes has entirely overthrown and unfitted both for the buſineſſes and entertainments of ſocial life. And he who thinks by ſuch a life to ſerve God, or to promote the ſalvation of his ſoul, neither knows God, nor has any apprehenſion of what ſaving his ſoul implies, and cannot be acquitted of the charge of ſuperſtition. No, to ſerve God means, from love and obedience to him to ſerve his creatures of the human race, and to fulfil all the duties of life; and

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to promote the ſalvation of his ſoul is to employ our capacities and abilities agreeably to the will of our creator in the beſt and moſt uſeful manner; and to effect as much good with them as we always are able.

No, the ſolitude I mean is every place, every retreat, where a man for a longer or a ſhorter time is alone and apart from the company of other perſons, that he may employ himſelf in reflections on himſelf and the great concerns of life, whether it be in a ſmall room of his houſe, or in the ſpacious and open plain; in the blaze of the meridian ſun, or by the milder light of the nocturnal moon. Neither darkneſs nor confinement, but ſilence and independence and the abſence of ſuch perſons, as might interrupt and diſturb the train of our thoughts, are the eſſentials of retirement. The more extenſive however the field of our view and ſentiment; the farther our eyes can reach; the freer our breaſt can reſpire; the more our heart can comprehend, and the more unimpeded it may expand: the more productive to us is ſolitude in great, in generous, in pious thoughts and ſentiments; the more likely is it to be and to procure to us what it ought to be and to procure. Even the preſence of a mind congenial with our own, of a heart in uniſon with ours, and having an affection for us, is frequently not only no hindrance, but rather an advantage to it. To ſuch a ſolitude we aſcribe great worth

worth and manifold utility. And this for ſundry reaſons.

In ſolitude we think more ſedately, more undiſturbed and free; and thinking, my pious hearers, is the grand prerogative of man, the foundation of his utmoſt perfection and happineſs. In ſociety and in the midſt of our affairs it frequently happens, that in this reſpect we are more paſſive than active. We muſt take the impreſſions of external objects as they fall upon us; our ideas are fixed, thus or otherwiſe determined, by what ſurrounds us, by whatever we ſee and hear, by what we have to do. They commonly glide away from before us as quickly as they ariſe; one preſſes upon the other; their impetuous torrent carries us away with it. But ſeldom can we chuſe from among them; ſeldom can we detain ſuch as are moſt agreeable and important to us; ſeldom can we diſmiſs ſuch as promiſe us neither profit nor pleaſure; ſeldom can we diſtinguiſh between truth and falſehood, between reality and appearance. We there collect more matter for thought, than we can apply our mind to in all its force.

When we enter into retirement; when we paſs into ſolitude: we are then, in regard of thought, more active than paſſive. We act rather within us, and by our proper energy, than allow other things to act upon us. Our attention is leſs interrupted, is more continued and ſtrong. We may ſelect from

from among the objects of our reflection; tarry as long as we will with those that in present circumstances are most profitable and pleasant; consider them on more sides than one, in more than one combination; compare them with our extraneous perceptions, with our other ideas; apply them more calmly to ourselves; imprint them deeper in our memory and our heart; and revolve them so long and in such various ways, till they diffuse a pure light upon our minds, and a genial warmth into our hearts, and thus become so fixed that they cannot be forgotten. Thus may we, by silent, solitary reflection, one while extend and rectify certain notions in religion, at another unravel some difficulties which perplexed our mind on the theatre of the world, now hush our troubles and cares by a clearer conception of their causes, and the most effectual lenitives, then collect new forces for the performance of our duty, and for proceeding on the path of perfection, then again, by considering our worldly affairs and concerns with stricter attention, learn more wisdom and prudence for carrying them on. At all events, we exercise and strengthen our mental powers; many obstructions that incumbered our way, disperse and retire; and we return with more serenity and cheerfulness to active and social life. Our horizon becomes enlarged by reflection; we have learnt to survey and to combine more objects; we carry with us a clearer sight, a juster judgment, firmer principles, into the world wherein

wherein we live and act; and are afterwards able, even amidſt various diſtractions, ſo much the longer to arreſt our attention, and to think and determine more juſtly, as we have accuſtomed ourſelves to this exerciſe in retirement.

In the ſilence of ſolitude we have ſecondly a more inward conſciouſneſs of ourſelves, of our exiſtence, of our faculties, of our dignity. How often and how eaſily do we forget ourſelves in the hurry of buſineſs, in the diſtractions of company, in the eddy of a buſtling life! How apt are we there to exiſt far more in others than in ourſelves, to eſteem the judgments and approbation of others, far more than the judgment and approbation of our hearts, take far more pains to give ſatisfaction to others than to ſatisfy ourſelves, rejoice much more in being thought wiſe and good, rich and great, by others, than in the thorough conviction that we intrinſically are ſo! But, the more a man exiſts and lives in public and the leſs to himſelf: the leſs frequently and leſs perfectly does he enjoy his life; the more does it reſemble a dream; and the more eaſily will he be deceived by every error and ſpecious appearance that offers.

Whereas in ſolitude, my dear friends, our mind, as it were, returns home; there ſhe collects her ſcattered forces, and concentrates them within herſelf. There we wake, as it were, from a dream; there we ſeparate ourſelves from all that is without us and is not properly our own; there we ſeparate

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our very thoughts from that which thinks within us. There we intimately feel, that we are, that we live, that we think, that we are intelligent, free agents, capable of great things, immortal. And what a bleſſed ſentiment is this! It is the genial ſentiment of one awaking from a trance, whoſe ſenſes had been faſt locked up, who had loſt all voluntary motion, all conſciouſneſs, and now opens his eyes to clear day-light, is ſenſible to his internal faculties, exerts them freely and with perſpicuous conſciouſneſs, and impreſſed with theſe delicious ſenſations, praiſes his great preſerver, that he ſtill exiſts and lives, and can in ſpirit raiſe himſelf to him!

How much nobler, how much more bliſsful is this conſcience of ourſelves and our abilities, than the vain regards of our figure, our apparel, our outward circumſtances, our riches, our borrowed plumage and diſtinctions, which ſo frequently eſtrange us from ourſelves, and prevent us from diſcerning what actually belongs to our proper ſelf, what gives us our true worth and dignity, from among the multitude of objects to which we falſely attribute them! And when thus, in the ſolemn hour of ſolitude, the ſentiment of ſelf is alert within us; when thus the dazzling glare of what is foreign from us, what is only for a ſhort period connected with us, vaniſhes from before our eyes; when thus our mind as it were ſcans the depths of its nature: what capacities, what powers, what diſpoſitions

diſpoſitions for higher perfection and happineſs, it diſcovers in itſelf! With what ſtrong conviction it perceives, that its preſent ſtate is not the completeſt mode, not the ultimate end of its exiſtence; that it is not and becomes not here, what it may be and become; that an energy reſides within it, ever on the alert, conſtantly embracing more, and conſtantly aiming at remoter objects, which is ſtruggling to burſt its narrow bounds, and to produce, in other circumſtances, in other connections with the viſible and with the ſpiritual world, totally different effects, and to procure for itſelf the enjoyment of quite other ſatisfactions and felicities! Hence what eaſy prognoſtics of future greatneſs! What proſpects are diſcloſed of everlaſting being and everlaſting advancement, of progreſſive virtue and approving heaven! Yes, then is a man right glad in his exiſtence and his life; he rejoices in them far more than in all the externals that belong to him; apprehends his entire worth, his inherent dignity, what he is capable of doing and performing; and feels himſelf ſufficiently ſtrong to accompliſh every duty of life, to ſuſtain its afflictions and troubles, to bear every privation of outward things, and to quit that life itſelf, the firſt ſtep of his exiſtence, without reluctance, and preſs forward, with reſolution and ardour, into the ſuperior life.

In the ſilence of ſolitude, my pious hearers, we not only acquire and entertain a more intimate conſciouſneſs of ourſelves in general, but we learn likewiſe

likewiſe thirdly to know ourſelves and particularly our failings and infirmities, far better than in the tumult of ſociety. What a number of checks and hindrances does this ſalutary knowledge of ourſelves meet with in ſocial life! Here are multifarious and intricate affairs; there alluring diverſions and amuſements, which entirely draw off our attention from ourſelves, and fix it on externals. Here we meet with flatterers, who, from intereſted views or from weakneſs and obſequious complaiſance, pronounce us to be better than we are; there partial judges, who think to excuſe their own faults and extravagancies by juſtifying ours. Here are teſtimonies of politeneſs and others of friendſhip which bias our judgment of ourſelves and our actions. Here are prevailing maxims and cuſtoms; there faſcinating examples, which prevent us from inſpecting our failings and feeling our defects.

On coming into ſilence, on entering into ſolitude, the illuſions of ſelf-love diſperſe. The attention is fixed on ourſelves: the flatterer holds his peace: no partial or corrupted judge, no civil friend takes our judgment by ſurprize: the force of example is weakened or evaded: the common excuſes loſe all their validity. A man is more familiar with himſelf, inveſtigates cloſer, ſcrutinizes deeper, tries himſelf upon ſounder principles, and pronounces more impartially on the value of himſelf and his actions. There he will neither be led into error by the dread of betraying himſelf before

fore others, nor by the hope of obtaining from them a more advantageous opinion of him. There ſelf-conceit gives way to rational ſelf-love. There nothing is more natural than for a man to aſk his own heart: Am I really that for which I am taken? That wiſe, that virtuous, that ſincere, that upright, that beneficent, that well-diſpoſed, that uſeful man, which I am reputed to be by my friends? Have I done ſo much good, have I performed ſo much ſervice to ſociety as they give me credit for? Am I actually exempt from thoſe failings, which I know how to conceal in company, and from which I am thought to be exempt? Are theſe failings ſo inſignificant, are they ſo unavoidable, ſo inſeparable from human infirmity, as they are ſaid to be? Can I reflect on myſelf and on my moral condition with as much complacency, and be as ſatisfied with myſelf and my conduct, when I am not diſturbed in reflecting on them, when nothing beguiles me, nobody flatters me, when I conſider what I am and what I do, in the clear light of truth, in the preſence of him who ſees in ſecret? Oh how totally different, my dear friends, do we appear to ourſelves, how many weak places in our heart, how many infractions in our virtue, how many defects in our beſt diſpoſitions and actions, do we then perceive, which we almoſt always overlook in the ordinary diſſipations of our lives, or only diſcern them as it were in the ſhade! And muſt not ſuch diſcoveries as theſe be of ineſtimable moment to

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us, muſt they not render ſolitude, which enables us to make them, dear to us?

But ſolitude muſt become ſtill dearer to us, my pious hearers, if we conſider in the fourth place that we there apprehend the being of God and his nearneſs, far more intimately and acutely than it is poſſible for us in other circumſtances to do. Indeed the Omnipreſent is everywhere near to us, he pervades all, animates all, works in all and through all; and the idea of him never abſolutely forſakes the wiſe man and the chriſtian, even in the noiſe and hurry of buſy and ſocial life. He has the Lord always before him and walks continually in his preſence. But how frequently will this greateſt, this moſt bleſſed of all ideas, be obſcured by the unavoidable diſtractions and buſineſſes which engroſs our whole attention! How ſeldom can we entertain it properly, or dwell long enough upon it! How much oftener is it then only like a feeble, tranſient gleam, or the cold, unfruitful light of the moon, than the ſtrong beams of the ſun, warming, invigorating, illuminating and enlivening nature!

No, only in the ſilence of ſolitude, only in theſe ſolemn hours and moments, when all around us is ſtill, when we hear nothing but the voice of God in nature, the voice of God in our hearts, the voice of God in his word, only there do we learn to obſerve the revelations of the deity within us and without us, ſee ourſelves ſurrounded with the effects

of his power and goodneſs, and cordially feel that he is not far from every one of us, that he is all in all. There our reflections are perſpicuous and certain: If I be, then God is; if I be and operate here, then God is and operates here, by whom I ſubſiſt and live. Am I encompaſſed on all hands by creatures, with beauties, with endowments, with powers? Then am I encompaſſed on all ſides by God, the father of all theſe creatures, the original fount of theſe beauties, theſe powers, the giver and preſerver of theſe endowments. Where force, where motion, where life, where intelligence, where freedom and activity is, there is God, there he reveals himſelf, there he acts! How near, how inexpreſſibly near then is he to me, and to everything that is and lives and thinks and moves! What can I be and think and will and do and enjoy, that is not to me a proof of the exiſtence and preſence of God, without whom nothing is and nothing will be, nothing can be, and nothing happen? No, I have no need to ſoar into the heights of heaven, to ſearch for him, the Omnipreſent, nor to dive into the abyſſes of the deep, neither to look for him in the ſplendor of the ſun nor in the darkneſs of the night, neither through the boundleſs regions of the ſky nor in the temples of his worſhipers, neither in this nor in that peculiar ſpot of his immeaſurable domain; he is in the height and in the depth, in the ſplendor of the ſun and in the obſcurity of the night, among the hymning

hymning choirs of the intelligences above, and in the midſt of his worſhipers on earth; he is here and at the ſame time there, in me and in each of his creatures, is everywhere, and everywhere equally great, equally powerful, equally good, everywhere eſſential perfection and love! Nothing can conceal me from his inſpection, nothing deprive me of his vivifying and bleſſing influence, nothing of his paternal tenderneſs; nothing ſeparate me from him, without whom I ſhould not be, and without whoſe power and will I could not continue for a moment! — And now when theſe thoughts are vigorous in me; when I thus apprehend the nearneſs of my God, my creator and father; feel that I live and move and am in him: what a light muſt diffuſe itſelf upon all around me, what brightneſs into my mind! What are the cares and what the troubles that will not then vaniſh away! What ſtrife of the paſſions will not then ſubſide! What tumult not ſink into peace! What hopes, what aſſurance, what joy will animate and pervade my frame! What a foretaſte ſhall I be bleſſed with of purer and everlaſting ſatisfaction! And ſhall not the ſolitude that promiſes and procures me ſuch advantages be dear to me?

O ſolemn ſilence, be thou hailed of me! Hail, ſacred ſolitude! ſacred to wiſdom, to ſelf-poſſeſſion, to ſupernal joys, ſacred to the complacency of heaven: ever be thou bleſſed of me, ever let

me find thee the reſtorative, the comfort, the ſolace of my ſoul! Take me into thy boſom, when, ſtunned with the noiſe of the world and weary of its pleaſures, I am only alive to my intellectual wants! Oh ſhed thy mild reviving influence on me, when I feel the laſſitude of the traveller, overtaken by night, while yet a long way from the place he endeavoured to reach, or who has had the misfortune to ſtray from his path! Shield me from the deriſion of the vain, from the unmerited ſcorn and the uncharitable judgment of the envious, from the melancholy view of the follies, the crimes and the miſeries, which ſo often disfigure the ſcene of buſy and ſocial life! Be thou my ſanctuary and hiding place from the hoſtile attacks of infidelity and doubt; dart light around me when my path is obſcure; appeaſe my ſwelling heart, abate the rage of every wild and furious paſſion, eſtabliſh ſerenity in my breaſt; give me to feel the intimate preſence of my creator and father, to taſte the raviſhing joys of exalted devotion, and be to me the gate of heaven!

But, wouldſt thou, my chriſtian friend and brother, wouldſt thou that ſolitude ſhould be and procure to thee what it is and procures to the wiſe man and the chriſtian; then let the following maxims of prudence be recommended to thee in the uſe of it.

Seek not ſolitude from diſguſt or miſanthropy; not that thou mayſt give freer ſcope to thy ſullen

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and gloomy reflections, or the furious fallies of thy wounded pride, thy affronted vanity; not for breaking forth in fad complaints, or for indulging ſome ſecret ſorrow or ſome unruly paſſion; not for withdrawing thyſelf from thy brethren, for diſſolving thy intercourſe with them, and depriving them, as unworthy, of thy ſervices and converſe. No, this were to profane the ſolemn ſilence that ſurrounds thee, a criminal abuſe of ſo excellent a means of improving and calming thy heart: and every folly thou committeſt there; every depraved ſentiment or ſenſation thou indulgeſt there, will ſo much the more degrade thee, as it was more eaſy for thee to avoid or to ſuppreſs it.

Seek not ſolitude, when thy duty, the duty of thy ſtation and calling ſummons thee to active life, when thy friend, thy brother, is in need of thy ſuccour, when thou canſt perform ſomething uſeful to ſociety. To do good is always better than to think well: uſeful employment preferable to the loftieſt repoſe; a magnanimous ſacrifice for the benefit of others more meritorious than the nobleſt ſentiments. Beware then of prefering the pleaſures of ſolitude, innocent and reſpectable as they are, to the pleaſures of beneficence, and, under the pretence of promoting thy own internal perfection, to neglect the advancement of the general welfare.

Seek not ſolitude, thirdly, as a puniſhment on thyſelf, as a penance for thy too frequent diſſipations and amuſements. Thus it would ſoon become burdenſome

denſome to thee. Thus it could neither be uſeful nor agreeable to thee, and the oppreſſive languor that would haunt thee there would ſoon deliver thee a prey to any fooliſh and dangerous entertainment and gratification, that bids fair to free thee from this hateful incumbrance. No, the lively ſenſe of thy ſpiritual wants, the ſenſe of thy ſuperior appointment, the deſire of becoming wiſer and better and of having more communion with God, ſhould drive thee into retirement, and ſhould regulate thy thoughts and thy employment there. It ſhould be the nouriſhment and recreation of thy mind and heart, the ſoother of thy cares, the reward of thy induſtry and punctuality in buſineſs, thy refreſhment after wearifome application to prepare and invigorate thee for thoſe freſh exertions which thy ſtation in life demands.

If in theſe views thou enter into ſolitude, let thy thoughts and ſentiments flow unrepreſſed, ſo long as they are innocent and proper, ſuitable to thy preſent temper of mind and thy immediate wants. Lay no reſtraint upon thyſelf, unleſs particular purpoſes require it. Let the ſentiment of thyſelf, the clear internal conſciouſneſs of what thou art and doſt, be active in thee; hide thyſelf not from the God within: repel no thought or idea merely becauſe it is ſtrange or unuſual to thee; let thy mind exert its energy without reſtraint. The more freely, naturally and calmly thou ſhalt think and apprehend; the more will the receſſes of thy heart diſcloſe themſelves

ſelves to thee; truth will ſhine upon thee with a brighter radiance; and the farther advances wilt thou make in ſelf-knowledge, in wiſdom and virtue.

Laſtly, never depart out of ſolitude without taking with thee into ſocial and active life ſome good and luminous conceptions, ſome generous, pious emotion, ſome virtuous reſolution, or ſome ground of comfort. Retirement ſhould not be ſo much an ultimate end as a means to higher aims. Let not thy attachment to ſolitude render thee moroſe and querulous, diſpirited in goodneſs, ſullen, or unſocial, ſhy and unfriendly to mankind. Return to thy brethren with an open countenance, a cheerful heart, with firmer affection; and afterwards apply the force thou haſt collected, the perceptions thou haſt acquired, the ſerenity thou haſt reſtored within, the ſatisfaction and hopes thou haſt confirmed, the ſenſe of the divine preſence and proximity wherewith thou haſt impreſſed thy heart; apply all theſe to the more prompt and cheerful proſecution of thy buſineſs, to a greater circumſpection in thy conduct, to a happier enjoyment of the bounties of thy God, apply them to the purpoſes of beneficence and the advancement of human happineſs. Purſue thy journey forward on the road towards the mark of the prize of thy high calling, which now ſhines brighter before thee; proceed undiſmayed and firm, and practiſe, as thou goeſt, the leſſons thou haſt learnt in this ſchool of wiſdom and virtue. So wilt thou completely anſwer the true ends of thy creation,

ation, and neither be indolent and inactive in solitude, nor trifling and negligent in the hurry of the world.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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